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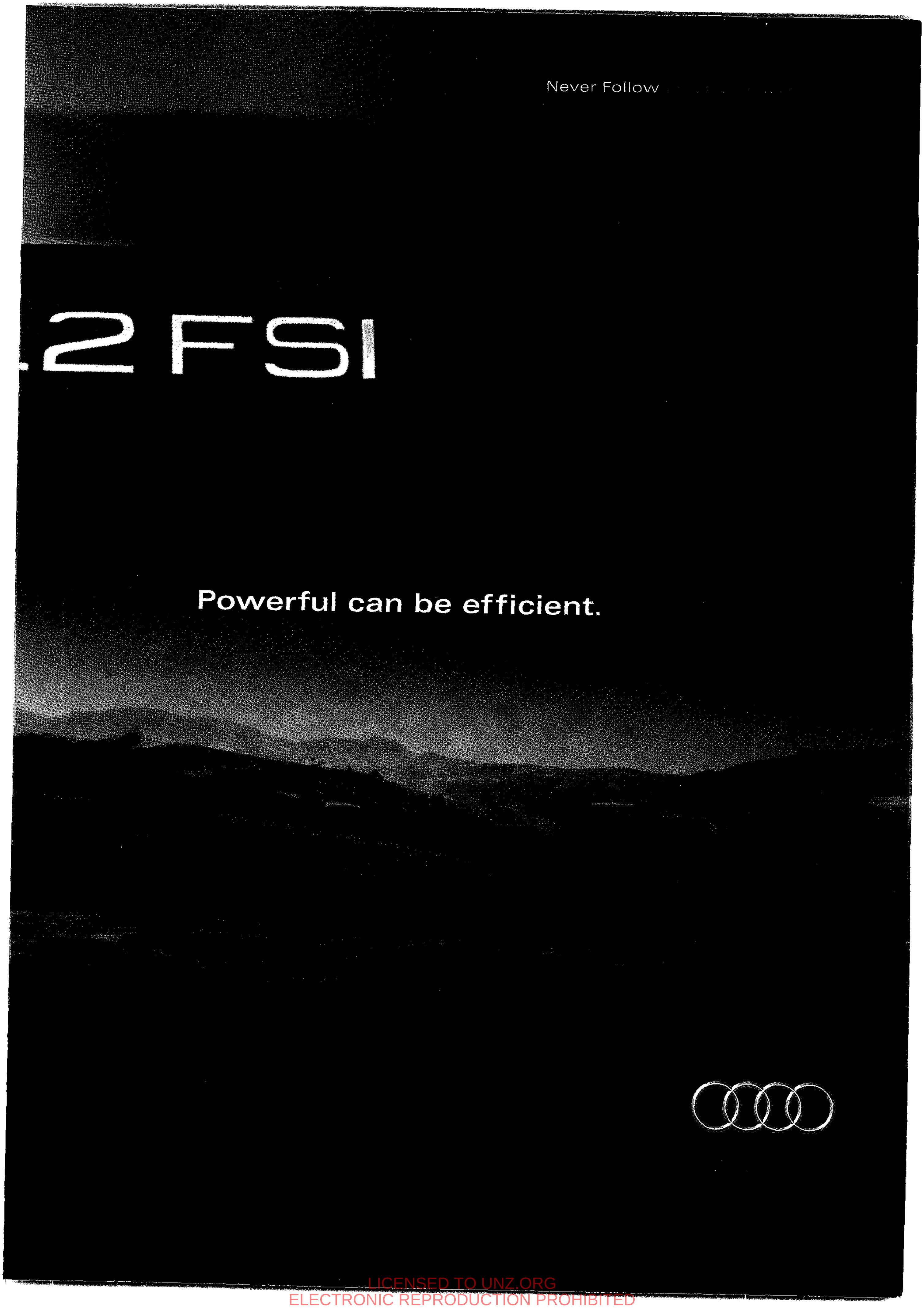
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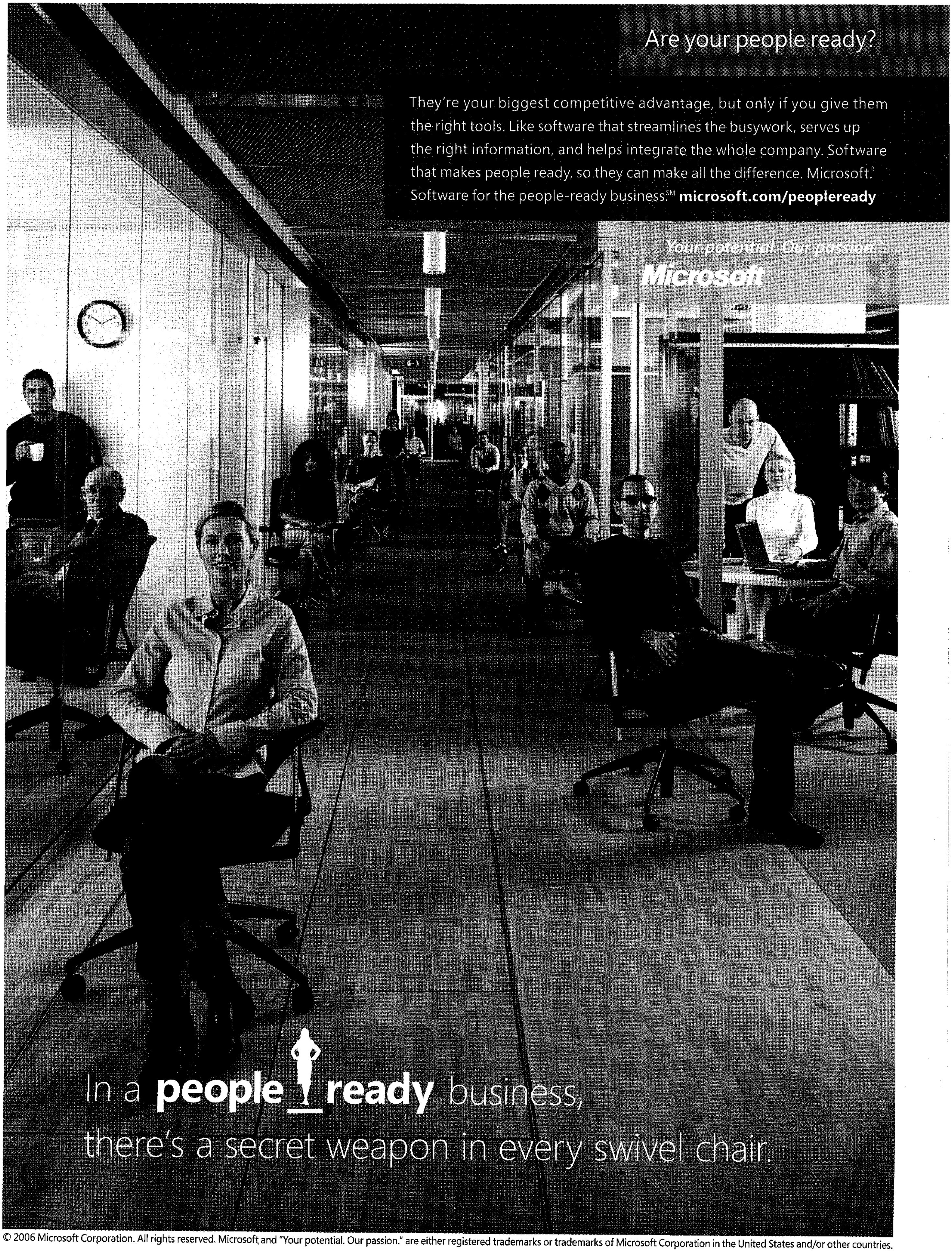
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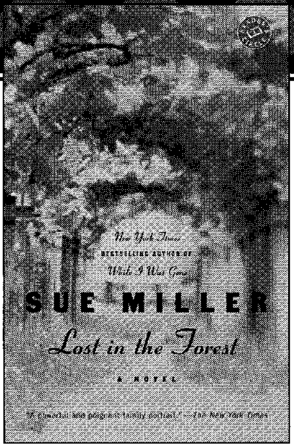

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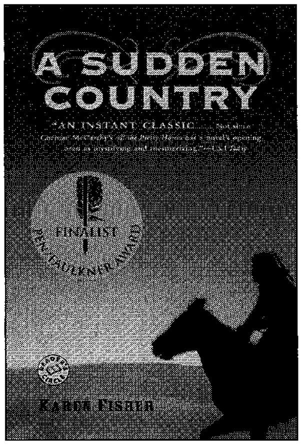

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—*Chicago Tribune*

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CONTRIBUTORS

Frances FitzGerald ("Holy Toledo," p. 26) is the author of several books, including "Cities on a Hill" and "Way Out There in the Blue."

Jon Lee Anderson (The Talk of the Town, p. 23; "Castro's Last Battle," p. 44) is a staff writer. His book "The Fall of Baghdad" is available in paperback.

Paul Simms (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 34), the creator of "NewsRadio," writes for magazines and television.

Stacy Schiff ("Know It All," p. 36) is the author of "A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America," which won this year's George Washington Book Prize.

Barbara Ras (Poem, p. 40) has a second collection of poems, "One Hidden Stuff," coming out in September.

Ben McGrath (The Talk of the Town, p. 22) is a staff writer.

Alec Wilkinson ("The Lobsterman," p. 56) is a longtime writer for the magazine. His new book, "The Happiest Man in the World," will be published next spring.

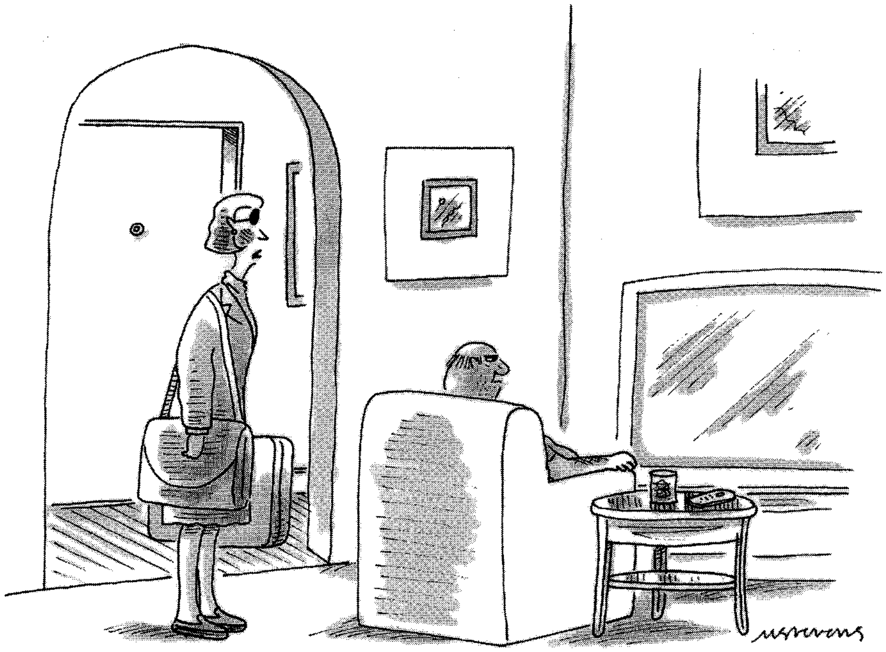
Terrance Hayes (Poem, p. 62) has written three books of poems, including "Wind in a Box."

Alberto Méndez (Fiction, p. 66), who died in 2004, was awarded a Spanish National Prize for Literature in 2005. This is his first short story to be published in English.

John Updike (Books, p. 74) is the author of "Terrorist," his twenty-second novel, which came out last month.

Paul Goldberger (The Sky Line, p. 82) is the magazine's architecture critic. His most recent book is "Up from Zero."

Gahan Wilson (Cover), a cartoonist, contributes regularly to the magazine. ♦



"I've decided to cut and run."

THE MAIL

THE ORIGINS OF DESSERT

It may be true that, as Bill Buford writes, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Pepys never ate a dessert, but this tells us more about the sad state of the English diet in the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries than it does about the history of dessert as a practice or custom ("The Dessert Lab," June 26th). It is certainly not true that dessert is a modern concept, since as far back as the Roman Empire the *mensa secunda* included pastries, sweets, and savories. After the Arabs brought sugarcane and the production of granulated sugar to the Iberian peninsula, in the eighth and ninth centuries, the Spaniards developed a rich tradition of custards, puddings, sponge cakes, nougats, candied fruits, and cookies, often using caramelized sugar. Spain is also where the idea of dessert—"a way of not having to say good night," as Buford puts it—has been expanded to include the entire day. From the first *cortado* in the morning in a crowded café to the last tapa well after midnight, every eating experience is designed to satisfy the social need to linger with friends.

Ed Wilde
Athens, Ga.

UNDERSTANDING LEARY

Robert Greenfield's book "Timothy Leary: A Biography," reviewed by Louis Menand, has a peculiar strategy (Books, June 26th). If Timothy Leary was not a saint, if he partied too much, loved too many women, and wasn't always a model of integrity, then everything disturbing he ever said can easily be ignored. As a scholar and researcher, Greenfield is energetic, meticulous, and organized. But he is so consumed with documenting every inconsistency in Leary's statements, every time he disappointed a friend, and every infidelity he committed that his energies often seem misdirected. If one doesn't look at Leary's ideas, his life makes no sense at all. Greenfield chooses to ignore not only the content of Leary's ideas but also the context in which he was writing, and the purpose Leary himself attributed to his work. As Leary often reminds us, he was part of, and spoke for, the first post-Hiroshima generation: the first generation to take for granted the possibility—even the likelihood—of human extinction at our own hands. For Leary, psychedelics were the only visible hope for a race tottering on the brink of extinction. His purpose was serious and political. Without reference to this over-all vision, Leary's life becomes a catalogue of trivial misdeeds. As such, "Timothy Leary: A Biography" is impeccably thorough, but one wonders what purpose this catalogue of errors serves.

Sherri Paris
Denis Berry
Futique Trust, Estate of
Dr. Timothy Leary
Santa Cruz, Calif.

AGNEW'S ALLITERATIONS

David Remnick's comparison of the rhetorical styles of Vice-President Spiro Agnew in the Nixon years and Vice-President Dick Cheney today repeats a mistake commonly made concerning the phrase "nattering nabobs of negativism" (Comment, July 10th & 17th). While the phrase was indeed coined by William Safire during Agnew's 1970 mid-term campaign, it referred not to the Administration's press critics but to Democratic members of the U.S. Senate, specifically Senators Kennedy, Fulbright, and Montoya, with Larry O'Brien, then the D.N.C. chairman, thrown in to complete the "4-H Club—the hopeless, hysterical hypochondriacs of history."

Victor Gold
Former Press Secretary to
Vice-President Agnew
Fairfax, Va.

•

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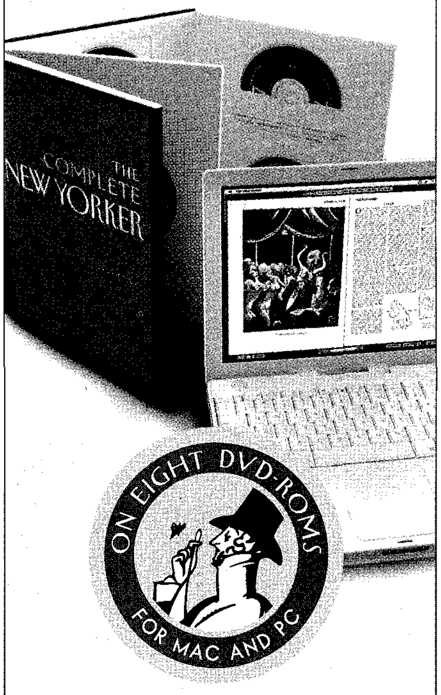

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A summer concert in MOMA's Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. Photograph by Landon Nordeman.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	31	1	26	27	28	29

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
BLUES MAN

August Wilson completed his ambitious ten-play cycle chronicling the African-American experience in 2005, not long before he died. Signature Theatre Company begins a three-play revival series with "Seven Guitars" (1995), Wilson's story of a blues guitarist who returns home to Pittsburgh's Hill District in the forties. Ruben Santiago-Hudson, who won a Tony Award for acting in the original Broadway production, directs. (See page 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
THAI GAME

The Lincoln Center Festival presents Thailand's top musicians, from the rock star Sek Loso to the rapper Joey Boy, in "Ramakien: A Rak Opera," the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's reimagining of an episode from his country's version of the Hindu epic the Ramayana. (See page 10.)

ART
EN PLEIN AIR

'Tis the season for road trips, and, for New York art fans, for visits to outer-borough sculpture parks. The Socrates Sculpture Park, in Queens, embraces both of these seasonal traditions with "Interstate," a show of works inspired by the open road, by artists who have bridged the gap between California and New York. (See page 12.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
ROMAN FEVER

Vincent La Selva, a veteran conductor renowned for his mastery of that mysterious musical quality known as *italianità*, brings his New York Grand Opera company to Central Park for a free performance of Puccini's "Tosca," offered at the Naumburg Band Shell. (See page 14.)

MOVIES
RUSSIAN CALENDAR

Andrei Tarkovsky's first feature film, "My Name Is Ivan," from 1962, is about the Second World War. His last, "The Sacrifice," from 1986, is about the Third. He made seven films in all, devising a sombre style that inspired the work of Alexander Sokurov, Béla Tarr, and others. Six of them will be screened at Anthology Film Archives. (See page 17.)

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
FUNKY BRAZIL

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

Oswaldo Lenine Macedo Pimental is known professionally by his second name, which Americans can pronounce Leh-NEE-nee. Anyone unsure of exactly what to call out should come to Joe's Pub on Aug. 8, when this omnivorous Brazilian musician will play two shows. Born in 1959 in the northeastern Brazilian city of Recife, Lenine has described himself as "Dutch in my head, black power in my feet," a not unusual admixture for a Brazilian. Six Degrees records has culled tracks—and the right ones, too—from three of Lenine's Brazilian solo albums to create his first American release, a self-titled CD. Though Lenine is as catholic in taste and output as the musicians who first inspired him—Milton Nascimento and Gilberto Gil—repeated listens suggest that funk is Lenine's default position. Sometimes it comes from a full band; other times it happens between an acoustic guitar and a pair of hands. Best are songs like "Hoje Eu Quero Sair So," which combines a rolling, high melody with shakers and drums that plant the song firmly on its feet.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ALL THIS INTIMACY
Second Stage Theatre presents the world première of a play by Rajiv Joseph, about a thirty-year-old man juggling several girlfriends. In previews. Opens July 27. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

THE AMERICAN LIVING ROOM
This festival, presented by HERE Arts Center, showcases dozens of new works that incorporate theatre, dance, puppets, and video, beginning July 28. (3LD Arts & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-868-4444.)

EVERYTHINGS TURNING INTO BEAUTIFUL
The New Group concludes its season with a new play by Seth Zvi Rosenfeld, about a luckless songwriting duo. With songs by Jimmie James. Carl Forsman directs. In previews. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE FANTASTICKS
The world's longest-running musical has returned after a four-year hiatus. Written and directed by Tom Jones, with music by Harvey Schmidt. Previews begin July 29. (Snapple Theatre Center, 210 W. 50th St. 212-307-4100.)

GEISHA
At the Lincoln Center Festival, Theatreworks Singapore brings a production based on the life of a geisha, featuring the Japanese Kabuki performer Gojo Masanosuke and the narration of Karen Kandel. July 27-30. (Gerald W. Lynch Theatre at John Jay College, Amsterdam Ave. at 58th St. 212-721-6500.)

INDIAN BLOOD
Primary Stages presents the world première of a new comedy by A. R. Gurney, about a young man who uses his Native American ancestry as justification for his defiant behavior. Mark Lamos directs. In previews. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

MARTIN SHORT: FAME BECOMES ME
The comedian and "Saturday Night Live" alum stars in a mock-autobiographical musical, with original songs by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman. Written by Short, Shaiman, and Wittman, who also directs. Previews begin July 29. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SEVEN GUITARS
The first of three August Wilson plays to be produced by the Signature Theatre Company follows seven people struggling in Pittsburgh in the late forties. Ruben Santiago-Hudson directs. Previews begin July 31. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

SHOUT! THE MOD MUSICAL
England in the nineteen-sixties is the setting of this musical revue, about the coming-of-age of five young women. Phillip George directs. In previews. Opens July 27. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

AMAJUBA: LIKE DOVES WE RISE
Yael Farber created and directs this portrait of five South African actors who grew up during apartheid, all of whom perform as themselves, in a play that originated in Johannesburg. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

CLOUD TECTONICS
It's a proverbial dark and stormy night when the innocent-looking Aníbal (a delightfully bemused Luis Vega) picks up a pregnant hitchhiker, the drenched Celestina (Frederique Nahmani), on Santa Monica Boulevard and takes her to his home, where all the clocks immediately stop. He offers her a microwaved quesadilla, though she's clearly more interested in the food of love. Meanwhile, stillness enfolds Aníbal's house, which becomes the only fixed point in a universe roiled by war and earthquake. Sensitively revived by James Phillip Gates, José Rivera's contemporary fable has a poetic and sensual charm, in spite of an epilogue that errs in overexplicating its mysteries. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444.)

CRAZY FOR THE DOG
An emotionally unstable hipster (Wrenn Schmidt) asks her boyfriend to hold her brother's beloved dog hostage, and, as ransom, she demands an honest explanation of what happened to her childhood cats. The whole play hinges on this unlikely scenario, and never lets up. You keep wondering whether, like in "The Lieutenant of Inishmore," which also revolved around an endangered pet, it's some kind of dark joke. But by the time the brother (Patrick Melville) is on his knees, weepily confessing past sins (hint: they have to do with those cats), you realize that the playwright, Christopher Boal, is going for offbeat melodrama, not comedy. The play does have moments of dramatic punch, but, like a flea-bitten canine, it's a real head-scratcher. (Bouwerie Lane, 330 Bowery, 212-677-0060, ext. 16.)

EAST TO EDINBURGH
This series showcases plays that will appear in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe later this summer. For a full schedule, visit www.59e59.org. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through July 29.)

FOOD FOR FISH
Adam Szymkowicz's new effort attempts many things at once: it's a goth-flavored comedy, with some cross-gender casting, about a family of three sisters whose dead dad is moldering in a coffin in their Manhattan living room. It's also a rather goofy Chekhov sendup (these sisters wax nostalgic for New Jersey, their childhood home), and, more successfully, a nocturne about a mysterious man-boy (Orion Taraban) who goes about Manhattan kissing solitary women, absorbing their sadness as fuel for his novel in progress. Szymkowicz is overreaching with some of his neurotic-comedy bits; his writing is most enjoyable when the characters relax into the slippery lyricism that seems their native element. (Kraine, 85 E. 4th St. 212-352-3101. Through July 29.)

ICE FACTORY FESTIVAL
Soho Think Tank's festival of new work continues with "The Flight of Icarus," adapted by Aaron Mack Schloff from the novel by Raymond Queneau. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

LOOSE
WestBeth Entertainment presents the Irish comedian Tommy Tiernan. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 212-239-6200. Through July 29.)

ORANGE LEMON EGG CANARY
Great (Steve Cuiffo), a magician with intimacy issues, starts dating a waitress named Trilby (Aubrey Dollar). He treats women like he treats his assistants, as props, not collaborators; still, Trilby is intent on peeking behind the psychological curtain. The central analogy in Rinne Groff's script, between magic tricks and relationships, is convincing, but it gobbles up the play; most of the dialogue is there to serve the extended metaphor, not the other way around. Nonetheless, there are satisfying bits of prestidigitation, and Cuiffo—charismatic as well as quick-fingered—is able to convey the sad emotional paradox of magicianship: when you're the only one who knows how the tricks work, it can be a lonely life. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. Through July 30.)

ROOM SERVICE
Peccadillo Theatre presents a suave and cunning revival of the 1937 show-biz farce, about an unscrupulous would-be producer, Gordon Miller (David Edwards), who is holed up with an entourage of actors and lackeys in a hotel managed by his mousy brother-in-law (played by Dale Carman, who exudes anxiety). Under the able direction of Dan Wackerman, the thirties gags receive the proper period accents, making for some colorful and outrageous antics. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-868-4444.)

SECRETS
In Gerald Zipper's drama, three affluent midlife couples meet for an animus-choked dinner party at the home of Len (Darren Lougée) and Lally (Elena Zazanis), a couple whose public reserve be-

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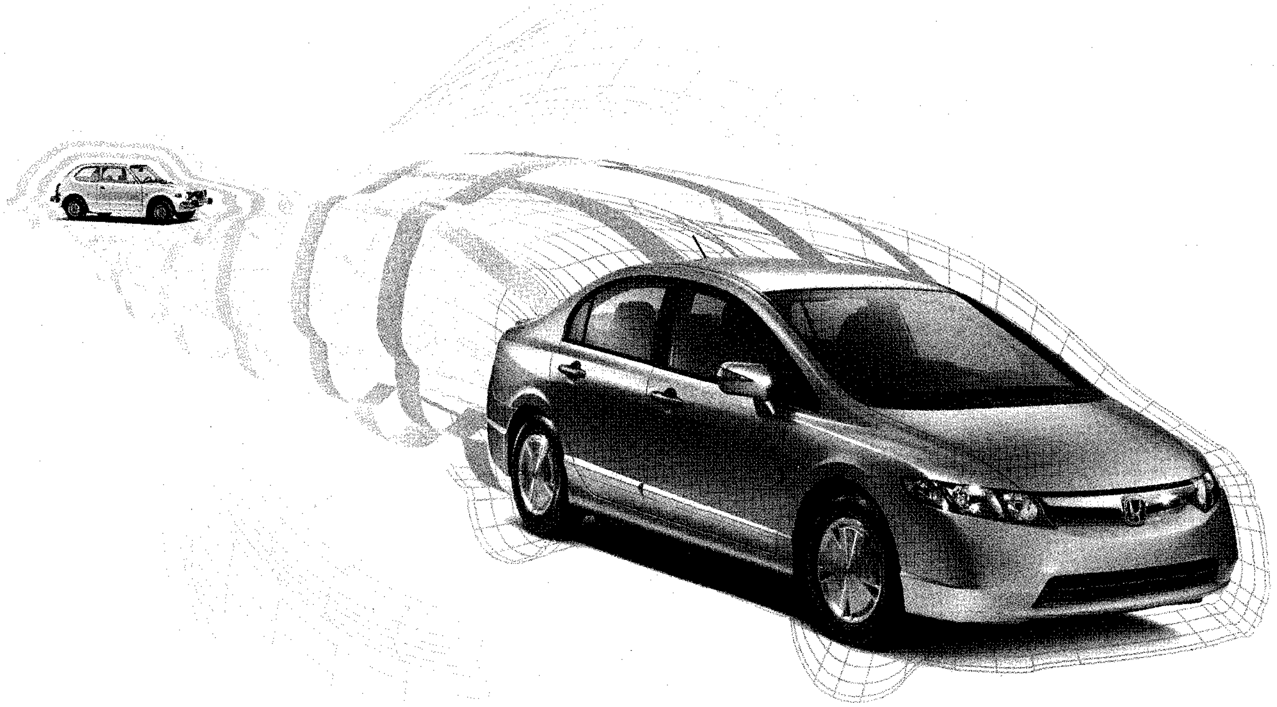

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HONDA
The Power of Dreams

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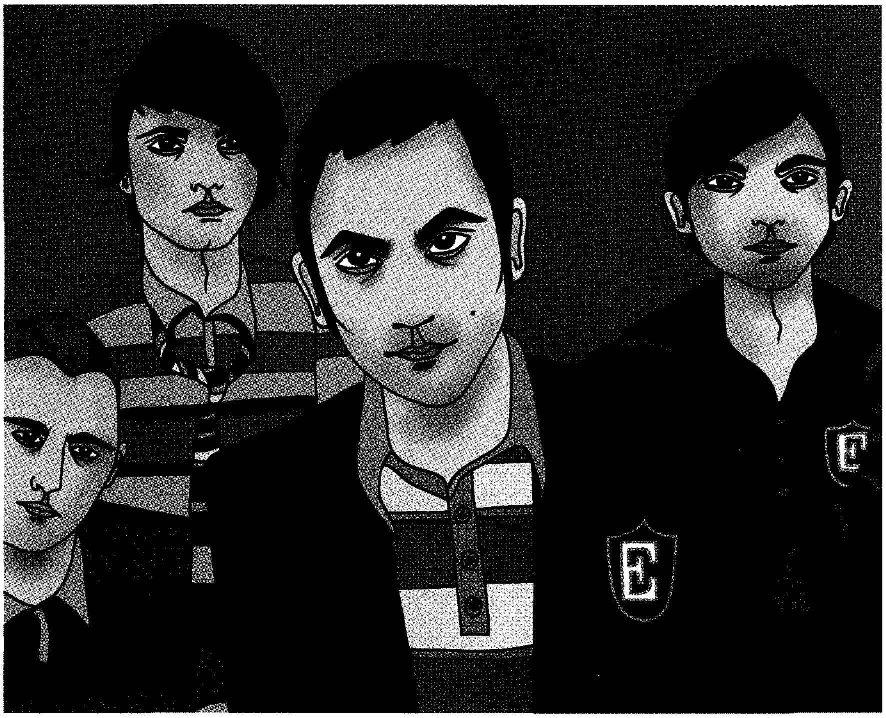
lies a very private hostility. The others let loose a stream of vindictive gossip and all the usual shameful confidences—marital betrayal, professional misconduct—and a few unexpected ones, without coming close to being interesting people. Among the performers, Alyce Mayors makes the strongest impression as Rhonda, an outer-borough wench whose pickled, vinegary delivery makes her fun to watch. (St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200. Through July 30.)

SPRING AWAKENING
In Michael Mayer's exciting musical reimagining of Frank Wedekind's 1891 play (at the Atlantic Theatre Company), fresh-faced teen-agers in a late-nineteenth-century provincial German town dream of the salvation of the flesh. The awakening, it turns out, is not just to sexuality but also to musical storytelling. The lyricist Steven Sater conveys, in the youths' syntactical fumblings, the inadequacy of speech to cope with the vortex of feeling, and the rigor of Mayer's direction communicates a powerful and poetic intelligence. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/26/06.) (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

SUMMER PLAY FESTIVAL
The third annual festival at the Theatre Row Complex showcases fifteen new works by emerging playwrights. (410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through July 30.)



The British band Editors brings its take on the post-punk sound to Irving Plaza.

LISELOTTE WATKINS

OUT OF TOWN

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
At the Main Stage, "Coastal Disturbances," by Tina Howe, closes on July 29; Tennessee Williams's "The Night of the Iguana" begins previews on Aug. 1. At the intimate Unicorn Theatre, "The Pilgrim Papers" begins previews on July 28 and opens Aug. 2. (Stockbridge, Mass. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Terrence O'Brien directs "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and Gia Forakis directs "The Rivals." (Garrison, N.Y. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
Tennessee Williams's "Sweet Bird of Youth" plays at the Main Stage, through July 30. "Romeo and Juliet," directed by Will Frears, opens Aug. 2. At the Nikos Stage, John Belluso's "A Nervous Smile" opens July 26. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

BRIDGE & TUNNEL: Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FAITH HEALER:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE FIELD:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **THE HISTORY BOYS:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE HOUSE IN TOWN:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. Through July 30. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **NO CHILD . . . :** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **PIG FARM:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **SUSAN AND GOD:** Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231. Through July 30. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TALK OF THE TOWN:** Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 212-840-6800. **[TITLE OF SHOW]:** Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-279-4200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE

ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—July 28: The **World/Inferno Friendship Society** specializes in a soulful take on the bohemian life. Punk energy and themes fuel this nine-piece, horn-driven band. July 29: **Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra and Tra-La-La Band,** a sprawling ensemble from Montreal, features members of God Speed! You Black Emperor. July 31: The brooding, romantic compositions of the **Black Heart Procession.**

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-614-0505)—July 27: **Andy Friedman,** an illustrator and cartoonist who contributes to this magazine, concludes his Thursday-night residency, in which he projects slides of his work and sings.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—July 27: **Philip Glass** and the **Kronos Quartet** perform their original score for the 1931 film "Dracula," which will be screened. With the local Balkan brass band **Slavic Soul Party.** July 28: The neo-soul singer **Leela James.** With **BFE Sound System,** a.k.a. Brooklyn Funk Essentials. July 29: A Boricua festival, with the salsa of **Sonora Poncena,** the Latin soul of **Joe Bataan,** and others.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—July 28: **Edie Brickell,** best known as Mrs. Paul Simon—and second best known for her hit "What I Am"—has reunited with the band that put that song in everyone's head, the **New Bohemians.** July 29: The smooth vocals of the R. & B. singers **Goapele** and **Alice Smith.** July 30: The young British m.c. **Lady Sovereign,** a key member of the U.K. grime scene, is a pint-sized white girl who traffics in high-energy and highly danceable material. With **Pete Rock** and **Jean Grae.**

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—July 26: **Butch Walker** left his post fronting the chart-grazing modern-rock band Marvelous 3 to produce songs for Avril Lavigne, Simple Plan, the Donnas, and many other artists, but he hasn't given up on living the rock-and-roll life. In fact, he glamorizes it to great effect on his latest album, "The Rise and Fall of Butch Walker and the Let's-Go-Out-Tonites," which is full of tales of sex and glitter. July 28: **Editors** are four young men from England with a penchant, like many of their peers, for the sounds of the generation before them. Their most immediate influences are Joy Division and Echo and the Bunnymen, but the earnest vocalist Tom Smith delivers such dark lines as "Blood runs through your veins, / that's where our similarity ends" with such panache that he makes the post-punk form all his own. Aug. 1: Seattle's **Candlebox,** which scored a few radio-friendly hits, mostly during the early-nineties grunge era.

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL
July 28-30: **"Ramakien: A Rak Opera."** This thoroughly contemporary retelling of the Thai version of the ancient Hindu epic the Ramayana has a large cast that incorporates a rock star, a kick-boxer, a ballerina, and a rapper. Since the original runs to twenty-four thousand stanzas in seven books, this production concerns itself with a single episode: the "Nang Loi," or "Floating Princess," chapter, itself a Thai addition to the story. Prince Rama (played by **Sek Loso,** Thailand's biggest rock star) needs to rescue his bride, Sita (voiced by an earthy Thai pop singer named **Palmy**), who has been kidnapped by the demon king Totsakan (brought to life by the local noise-guitar hero **Arto Lindsay** and **Photo Sticker Machine,** an electronica duo from Bangkok). Key to this drama are the monkey god Hanuman (here the Thai pop group **Noi Pru**) and one of Totsakan's consorts, Benjakai (the rock band **Modern Dog** and the vocalist **Pichet Klunchun**). With the Thai rapper **Joey Boy** as the narrator. The artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, in his first theatrical production, is the artistic director. (LaGuardia Concert Hall, 100 Amsterdam Ave., between 64th and 65th Sts. 212-721-6500.)

MCCARREN PARK POOL
Lorimer St. between Bayard St. and Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (212-307-7171)—July 29: The U.K.'s **Bloc Party,** a favorite of the indie-rock scene thanks to its début album, "Silent Alarm," which came out last year, delivers crisp and stark post-punk missives.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—July 25: The **IV Thieves.** Last year, Nic Armstrong, a young lad from Newcastle, England, and his band the Thieves set tongues wagging with an album of blues rockers, "The Greatest White Liar." Since then, he's changed the name of his band and its structure. Now the four musicians trade singing and songwriting duties, making them as thick as their name implies.

RANDALL'S ISLAND
East and Harlem Rivers (212-307-7171)—July 29: The arrival of the **Ozzfest** tour, now in its eleventh year, draws the city's metalheads out of their dark lairs. The lineup includes **Hatebreed, Lacuna Coil, Disturbed,** and **System of a Down,** but the highlight is, as always, the festival's namesake. **Ozzy Osbourne** may be splitting his time between the main stage and the second stage this year, but the word is that he's in full fighting form.

ROSELAND
239 W. 52nd St. (212-307-7171)—July 27: The **Pretenders,** led by the punk-rock priestess and outspoken animal-rights activist Chrissie Hynde. With the **IV Thieves** (see the Mercury Lounge).

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—July 25: The soulful vocalist **Thomas Mapfumo,** also known as the Lion of Zimbabwe. July 26: **Kekele,** an all-star ensemble from Congo, has a style rooted in the joyful rumbas of the fifties and sixties.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—The revered local rock promoter Tom Hyland takes over the club July 27-29 for the fourth annual "Dot Dash" festival. It opens with the Texas punk avatars the **Dicks.** The second night features the legendary sixties-era Ohio garage-rock band the **Alarm Clock.** The final night belongs to Cleveland's **Rocket from the Tombs,** a seminal ensemble of weirdos whose music back in the mid-seventies trod a fine line between arty experimentalism and rock brutality. Up-and-coming garage punks round out the bills each night.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—July 26: **Antony and the Johnsons, CocoRosie,** and **Matmos** join forces to benefit the Ali Forney Center, which provides emergency housing for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered young people.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—July 26-29: The vocalist **Tierney Sutton** has an engaging way with familiar standards. Her latest album, "I'm with the Band," was recorded live here last year.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—July 25-30: **Clark Terry,** the octogenarian brass virtuoso and indispensable Ellington teammate, has reconvened his celebrated big band.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—July 25-30: A horn-heavy outfit featuring the saxophonists **David Sanchez** and **Sonny Fortune** honors the *conguero* Ray Barretto and the pianist Hilton Ruiz, two recently deceased masters of contemporary Latin jazz. The percussionist **Vicente (Little Johnny) Rivero** is the special guest.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—July 27-30: **Kevin Mahogany,** a big-voiced singer who is well acquainted with blues and ballads, salutes Johnny Hartman, one of the smoothest of jazz crooners, best known for his 1963 collaborative album with John Coltrane. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—July 26-30: **Don Byron.** The clarinettist and saxophonist's forthcoming album, "Do the Boomerang," takes on the music of the Motown saxophone great Junior Walker. He recorded the disk, which is due out in the fall, with a singer, a Hammond-organ player, and a guitarist, among other musicians. For this engagement, however, he's backed by a slim quartet featuring the trumpeter **Ralph Alessi,** the bassist **Lonnie Plaxico,** and the drummer **Billy Hart,** and he'll presumably have other things on his mind.

"THE SPIRIT OF DJANGO REINHARDT"
The Gypsy guitarist **Tchavolo Schmitt** leads a pack of other European virtuosos, including the guitarist **Dorado Schmitt,** the violinist **Florin Niculescu,** and the accordionist **Ludovic Beier,** as well as the local saxophonist **Joel Frahm,** in a tribute to the legendary guitarist. (Rose Hall, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. Aug. 1.)

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—July 25-30: The **Greg Osby** quartet. In addition to his gripping saxophone work, Osby has settled into his role as one of jazz's most astute talent scouts. This quartet features a new member, the young pianist **Frank LoCrasto.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Raphael at the Metropolitan: The Colonna Altarpiece."** There's an exciting lurch in the style of Raphael's "The Colonna Madonna" (1504-05), an altarpiece whose long-dispersed parts, most belonging to the Met, have been reconvened, along with related works by others and documentation of its star-dusted provenance (including Francis I, of France, and J. P. Morgan). Raphael turned twenty-one while painting Mary and the baby Jesus on an outdoor throne, attended by a toddler John the Baptist and four saints, with a lunette of God the Father and a predella of scenes from the Passion. The decorous manner of an early influence, Perugino, abruptly gives way, in the male saints, to rugged cues from Michelangelo. The High Renaissance has begun. Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Girodet: Romantic Rebel."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Treasures of Sacred Maya Kings."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"The Art of Betty Woodman"** gathers ceramic works from throughout the artist's career. Through July 30. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** This summer, the roof garden is home to four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them are "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that produces a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Rembrandt and His Circle: Drawings and Prints."** Through Oct. 15. ♦ **"Anglo-Mania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Kara Walker at the Met: After the Deluge."** In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the artist, known for her politically charged silhouette cutouts, contemplates the effects of watery disasters on African-American communities, through a selection of her own work and items from the permanent collection. Through July 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Dada,"** a large and illuminating survey of the anti-art movement that countered despair with absurdity. Through Sept. 11. ♦ **"Douglas Gordon: Timeline"** includes the artist's most famous work, the glacially paced "24 Hour *Psycho*." Through Sept. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper."** Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Zaha Hadid."** Through Oct. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Full House,"** the Whitney's seventy-fifth-anniversary

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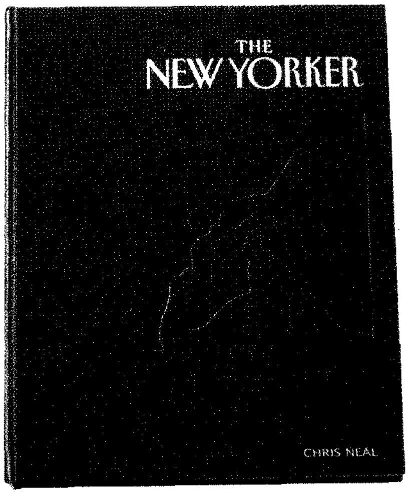

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extravaganza, includes a floor devoted entirely to the works of Edward Hopper. Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Graffiti,"** a survey of the urban art form. Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Eva Hesse: Sculpture."** Through Sept. 17. ♦ **"Max Liebermann: From Realism to Impressionism."** Through July 30. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3. For the duration of the Hesse show, the museum will also be open on Saturdays, from 11 to 5:45, with no charge for admission.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"We Skate Hardcore."** That's the boast of a group of Latino in-line skaters from Williamsburg that Vincent Cianni befriended and photographed over a period of eight years. His pictures of these young men and their neighborhood, already published as a book, spring from a tradition that includes Helen Levitt, Bruce Davidson, and Danny Lyon—a school that values genuine empathy as much as artfulness. But, perhaps because he collaborated so closely with his subjects (several of whom fill the margins around his prints with extended handwritten captions), Cianni makes a vividly personal mark. His best pictures are full of the complicated pleasures of brotherhood, and remain as exciting as the moment they were made. Through Aug. 6. ♦ **"On the Couch: Cartoons from *The New Yorker*"** presents almost eighty years' worth of psychoanalytic humor. Through July 26. ♦ **"The High Style of Dorothy Draper."** Through Sept. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)— **"Gustav Klimt: Five Paintings from the Collection of Ferdinand and Adele Block-Bauer"** includes the 1907 gold-and-silver-laced portrait of Adele, which will be joining the Neue's permanent collection. Through Sept. 18. (Open Thursdays and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK
32-01 Vernon Blvd., at Broadway, Long Island City (718-956-1819)—Those who can't make it to High Desert Test Sites, a locus of experimental art in California's Mojave Desert, can console themselves with a trek out to Queens to see **"Interstate: The American Road Trip."** This bicoastal collaboration focusses on distance and the methods by which it can be traversed. Lisa Anne Auerbach contributes a bike, perched on a pedestal, that made a 2,819-mile road trip. Virginia Poundstone's "Wildflower Median," a metal highway divider planted with summer blooms, cuts through the park's grass, and Carolina Pedraza lined the park's perimeter with green mailboxes. A sprawling sculpture by Chris Hanson and Hendrika Sonnenberg is constructed from three hundred and fifty street signs painted soothing shades of light green and blue. Most amusing, perhaps, is Mark Klassen's "Payphone Project," a telephone booth with a live open line that allows visitors to converse with bemused strangers in places like Texas, Hawaii, Illinois, and the basement of the Whitney Museum. Through Aug. 13. (Open daily, 10 to sunset.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

JULES FEIFFER
History is cyclical, especially for the political cartoonist. Feiffer's forty years of comic illustration have taken him through manifold political administrations and social changes. Yet, no matter how much has changed, things remain the same. Strips from the seventies read like something written yesterday; Nixon's foibles could be those of Bush. Themes of terrorism, family relations, and American ennui appear and reappear through the decades. An interpretive modern dancer, Feiffer's recurring metaphoric figure, twirls across one page, dancing despite "the winding down of all my hopes, wishes, and aspirations—which seldom get fulfilled." Like Feiffer, who goes on drawing in the face of duplicity, mendacity, and malaise, she keeps on dancing anyway. Through Aug. 11. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

"THE FACES OF ANGKOR"
The photographers Baku Saito, of Japan, and Chris Rainier, of Canada, present scenes of local life and temple architecture in the Cambodian region declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992. Through Aug. 18. (United Nations General Assembly Visitors' Lobby, entrance at First Ave. and 46th St. 212-963-0089.)

Short List

RUDY BURCKHARDT: De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050. Through July 28. **JAMES CASTLE / WALKER EVANS:** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through Aug. 11. **WANGECHI MUTU:** Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212. Through July 28. **RICHARD PRINCE:** John McWhinnie at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 50½ E. 64th St. 212-754-5626. Through Aug. 5. **NANCY RUBINS:** Lincoln Center, Broadway at 64th St. 212-980-4575. Through Sept. 4. **LOUIS STETTNER:** Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007. Through July 29. **"DAUGHTERS OF DADA":** Naumann, 22 E. 80th St. 212-472-6800. Through July 28.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

GULNARA KASMALIEVA AND MURATBEK DJUMALIEV
Two bodies of work by a husband-and-wife team, based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Kasmalieva and Djumaliev's dual-channel video "Into the Future" looks more at Siberia's past, with one screen relaying black-and-white footage of workers boarding an old-fashioned, round-shouldered bus and a ferry while the adjacent color screen surveys a postindustrial landscape of tumbledown warehouses, trash-strewn fields, and the rusted-out hulk of another old bus. A related series of color photographs catalogues what the artists call "New Menhirs"—a reference to the prehistoric stone monoliths that often marked burial grounds. In this case, the monuments are, again, crumbling factories in a fantasy land of almost beautiful desolation. Through July 29. (Plus Ultra, 637 W. 27th St. 212-643-3152.)

HANS RICHTER
The death knell for Dada sounded in 1924, according to art historians, and many artists moved into Surrealism. Others, like Richter (1888-1976), a founder of Zurich Dada, never vacated the premises. In fact, he wrote one of the early comprehensive texts on the subject, "Dada: Art and Anti-Art" (1965). Richter's enduring allegiance to the anti-movement is evident in this sweeping gallery survey, where abstract geometric paintings, Arp-like wood reliefs, and charcoal drawings crafted throughout his career could all easily be dated in the teens. His most exciting contribution, however, was his films, several of which flicker on flat-screen monitors. "Rhythm 21" (1921), in particular, was among the first avant-garde films to feature abstraction, and pointed the way for later practitioners like Stan Brakhage. Through Sept. 15. (Stendhal, 545 W. 20th St. 212-366-1549.)

JOSEF STRAU
The German artist, writer, and curator Strau presents an installation of modified floor lamps, daubed with paint and appended with trailing ribbons and scribbled pieces of paper, which crowd together like guests at a gothic garden party. Almost everything is white. Recorded text, often too garbled to make out, emanates from some of the assemblages. In the back room, a funereal black table decorated with white ribbons bears Xeroxed booklets containing installments of Strau's novel-like writings, which chronicle a noirish love story torquing between the U-Bahn and "books of demons." Through July 28. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770.)

TABLES FOR TWO

RACK & SOUL

2818 Broadway, at 109th St. (212-222-4800)—Danny Meyer imported a pair of Missouri pit smokers for his barbecue restaurant, Blue Smoke, in 2002; since then, pit smokers have become practically de rigueur for new barbecue restaurants. In February, John Wheeler, of the Mississippi barbecue team Natural Born Grillers, hauled a twenty-seven-hundred-pound specimen from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to Morningside Heights—site of this new spot, a collaboration between Michael Eberstadt, owner of Slice of Harlem and the late Bayou, and Charles Gabriel, of Charles' Southern Style Kitchen, at 151st Street (Wheeler is the honorary "BBQ Pit Master"). The walls are covered with old photos of uptown street scenes, selected by the Harlem preservationist Michael Henry Adams; even so, Gabriel calls Rack & Soul his "downtown" place.

It's not haute barbecue: Blue Smoke's gazpacho and chilled beets are nowhere to be found. Instead, each table gets a basket of biscuits, the insides heavy with butter, the outsides crusted with honey. Unlike Gabriel's other place, there is wine here, but it is served almost ambivalently, in small water glasses. Sweet tea and Abita beer, from Louisiana, go better with the main events: barbecue and fried chicken.

The applewood-fired smoker was worth the haul. After four hours, the baby back ribs are perfectly sealed, with succulent pink meat that falls easily from the bone. They come by either the half or the quarter rack, but it's hard to imagine only ordering the quarter. The fried chicken has a finely textured, pleasantly dry coating, and the flavoring is just right. It's Gabriel's mother's recipe (he is obligingly coy about the "special seasoning"), and he personally tends the skillets.

Unfortunately, the kitchen has a way of running out of basics—ribs, one recent evening, not to mention catfish, potato salad, and banana pudding. (A waitress, warily eyeing the kitchen, said, "I don't know what's going on back there.") But the crowd is mellow; no one seems bothered, not even by the music (this may be the first soul-food restaurant to feature a soundtrack of Foreigner and Journey). After the enormous portions, dessert seems impossible. But the frozen lemon cake is startlingly fresh and tart, and goes down easily. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $9.95-$17.95.)

—*Kate Julian*

"IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO KEEP THE LINE BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"
The title, a snatch of dialogue from the film "Grey Gardens," should prepare you for a lively exhibition of contemporary photography that deliberately blurs that line. Among the contributors are a number of photographers known for their use of antique printing techniques and classic subjects, including Sally Mann, John Dugdale, Dan Estabrook, Jerry Spagnoli, Robert Flynt, and Mark Kessell. Their presence sheds an especially favorable light on several less familiar artists, notably Paul Cava, Brian Riley, Jefferson Hayman, and Joseph Mills, the last of whose urban images look like they were transcribed from dreams. Through Aug. 4. (ClampArt, 531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.)

"MANHATTAN"
A trio of videos aims to create a collaged portrait of the city as idea. They don't really succeed on this count, but the work is still interesting. Only Kaoru Katayama (Japanese, but based in Spain) takes up the place-versus-placelessness challenge directly, with a hypnotic scene of traditional Salamancan dancers in black lace and toreador pants circle-dancing to a pounding techno score. They have to improvise, and in formation at that, but they do remarkably well. Chen Xiaoyun, from China, presents an urban-Eden dream, with strobing short takes of a nude man in a dark wood interspersed with jaundiced empty streets. The team of Caraballo-Farman, sharing between them Argentinean, Canadian, and Iranian roots, shoot through hotel windows to make a frieze of isolated, neo-Hopper vignettes. Through July 31. (The Project, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-4673.)

"A RABBIT AS KING OF THE GHOSTS"
According to its curators, the photographers Justine Kurland and Dan Torop, this wonderfully eccentric show of vintage and contemporary work "emphasizes the spiritual over the rational." As a result, even the most prosaic photos slip effortlessly into mystery; nothing is entirely what it seems. Eadweard Muybridge's grid of disembodied, gesturing hands suggests a magician's opening flourish, and, abracadabra, here are Susan Jennings's melting abstractions, Roe Ethridge's pale platinum moon, Corey McCorkle's fogbound hikers, Antoine-Henri Becquerel's radiant studies of radioactive matter. Since the work ranges from Atget to Kenneth Anger, the connections between pictures are far from obvious, but that's just what makes the show so fascinating. Through Aug. 11. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400.)

"SMALL WONDERS"
This terrific show of little photographs is proof that connoisseurship isn't suspended for the summer months. With forty-five pieces, a few no larger than postage stamps, it rounds up fine work by Edward Weston, Helen Levitt, Dorothea Lange, Man Ray, Alexander Rodchenko, and others for whom issues of scale were a lot less fraught than they are today. The intimacy of these pictures is ingratiating, but it wouldn't count for much if the images themselves weren't exceptional, including several miniature masterpieces and at least one lovely surprise: Walter Auerbach's view of Willem de Kooning's studio, circa 1950, with drawings littering the floor and an unfinished painting of a woman on the far wall. Through Aug. 25. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600.)

Short List

MARK DI SUVERO: Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through July 28. **ZAHA HADID:** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 212-633-6999. Through July 28. **ROSA LOY:** Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through July 28. **MARTIN SCHOELLER:** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Sept. 1. **RICHARD SERRA:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Aug. 11. **"MAPPLETHORPE/WARHOL":** Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181. Through July 28. **"SOUTINE AND MODERN ART":** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through Sept. 9.

DANCE

PILOBOLUS
In their second week at the Joyce, the pliable bodies of Pilobolus slink in and out of shadow in the film-noir-inspired "Prism," a New York première set to the pulsating beat of Coldplay. An eclectic spectrum of rotating programs shows that within its well-demarcated genre the troupe still has range, from the silky flexion of the rocking "Prism" to the cartoon creatures of "Pseudopodia" and "Aquatica" to the slapstick "Solo from 'The Empty Suitor,' " danced to "Sweet Georgia Brown." (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. July 25-28 at 8 and July 29 at 2 and 8. Through Aug. 12.)

SAN FRANCISCO BALLET
Helgi Tomasson's company, in its first appearance at the Lincoln Center Festival, brings Mark Morris's successful new version of "Sylvia," the story of a chaste nymph who, with a little help from the feisty god of love, falls for a none too heroic young mortal. Morris says that he was drawn to the story because it focusses on a strong, resourceful woman, but Delibes's brilliant score clearly inspired him as well; the third act, with its lush orchestrations and shimmering clarion calls brings out the best in Morris's limpid, artfully unaffected style. "Sylvia" is followed by a repertory program, with New York premières of works by Christopher Wheeldon, William Forsythe, and Tomasson. The company will be accompanied by the New York City Opera Orchestra. (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500. July 26-29 at 8 and July 30 at 3. For complete schedule, visit www.lincolncenter.org.)

CAPACITOR
In the science-minded troupe's "Digging in the Dark," performers gather in a suspended orb or dance in the dark, captured by heat-sensitive cameras. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. 212-352-0131. July 26-30 at 8.)

YASMEEN GODDER AND THE BLOODY BENCH PLAYERS
The Lincoln Center Festival's mini-festival of Israeli choreographers closes with Godder's excruciating "Strawberry Cream and Gunpowder." Amid a checkpoint barricade and a piece of turf, the dancers freeze in a tableau familiar from war photography: mouths gaping with grief, mouths stuffed with the finger muzzles of gun-shaped hands. As violence repeatedly interrupts play, emotions snap from pole to pole. Victims become bystanders become perpetrators. Almost incidentally, the turf is shredded, as the work walks the risk-fraught border between releasing the charge in its subject matter and being overwhelmed by it. (LaGuardia Dance Theatre, Amsterdam Ave. at 65th St. 212-721-6500. July 27 and July 29 at 7.)

DECADANCETHEATRE
The pioneering all-female hip-hop group, a fearless coalition of American and Japanese B-girls, unveils new repertory. "Ladies First" is a shout-out to influential women in hip-hop; "The City Breathing" showcases Gentry Farley's imaginative, electric costumes; and "It's Just Begun" uses the Jimmy Castor Bunch song as the basis for an improvisatory exchange between the dancers and DJ Professor Rockwell. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. July 27-30 at 8.)

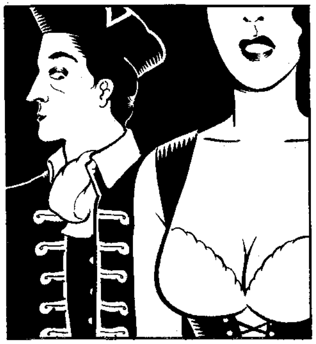
NOCHE FLAMENCA
The flamenco troupe, led by Soledad Barrio and her husband, Martín Santangelo, concludes its run. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-352-3101. July 27-28 at 8, July 29 at 2 and 8, and July 30 at 2 and 5.)

"DANCING IN THE STREETS"
The free dance-performance series continues on Saturday, when the companies of the downtown stalwart Nicholas Leichter (Nicholasleichterdance) and of the longtime Paul Taylor dancer Patrick Corbin (CorbinDances) share a bill, with selections from Leichter's "Carmina Burana" followed by Corbin's love duet "Forever" and his blustery "Partly Cloudy." On Sunday, the Taiwanese choreographer Kun-Yang Lin, now based in Phila-

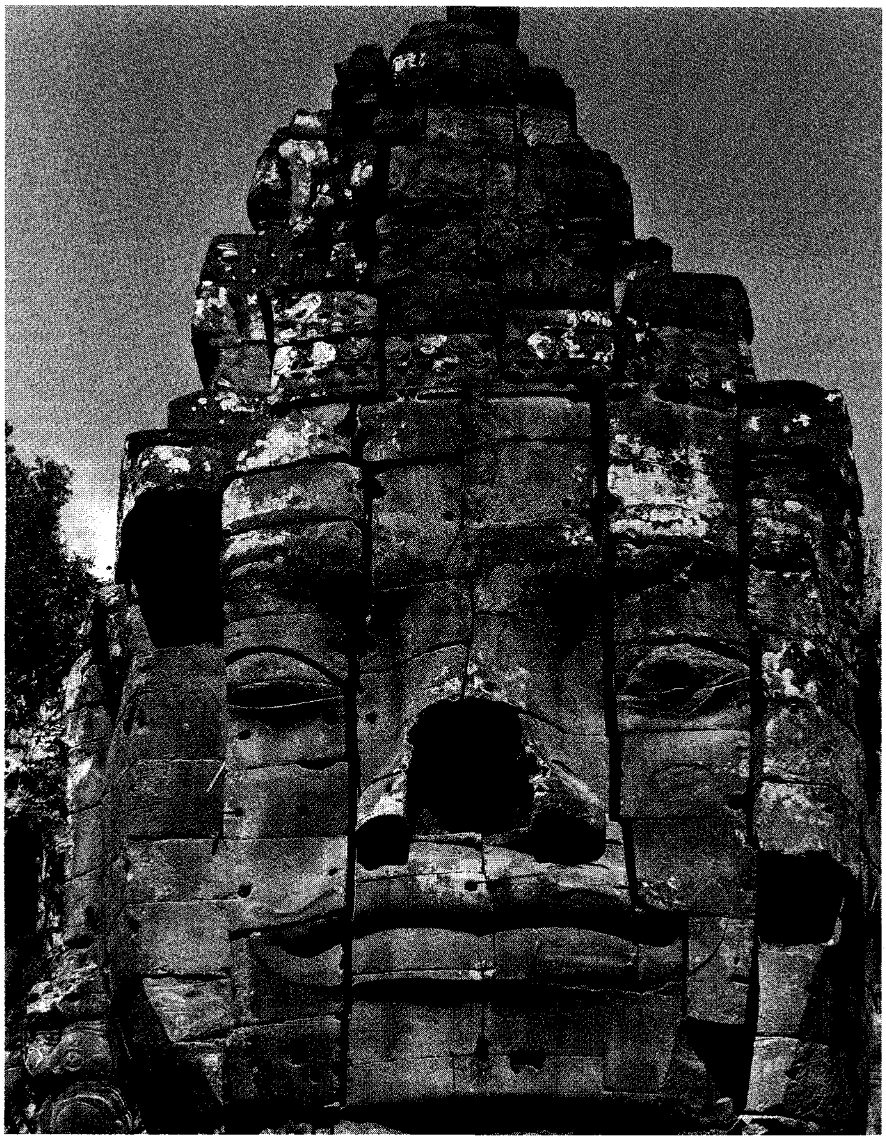
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ANCIEN RÉGIME

In 1954, in an article called "A Certain Tendency in French Cinema," François Truffaut, who would soon be joined by Godard, Chabrol, and other young critics hungry to direct, began a prolonged assault on the overstuffed style and inflated reputations of French directors of that era. Truffaut could be cruel, but he wasn't always wrong, and Christian-Jaque's 1952 comic swashbuckler, "Fanfan la Tulipe," now at Film Forum, is an example of what enraged him. The movie is set during the reign of Louis XV, when war was a sport for the aristocracy. The voice-over narration, written by Henri Jeanson, has a dry satirical snap, but over all "Fanfan" is a rather tiresome capering farce, in which the handsome Gérard Philipe, as a peasant soldier, leaps around unconvincingly while minor players from the Comédie Française trot out centuries-old traditions of buffoonery. It co-stars the young, fully curved Gina Lollobrigida, but amid all the arch and titillating goings on, we aren't treated to what we most want to see, which is the irresistible Philipe talking intimately to women. See it in a mood of relaxed indulgence.

—*David Denby*



GRANT SHAFFER



A photograph by Baku Saito, from "The Faces of Angkor," at the United Nations.

delphia, offers some of his striking East-West mixes. (Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, Second Ave. at 47th St. 212-625-3505. July 29-30 at 3.)

YOSHIKO CHUMA AND THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS
For her most recent site-specific work, the downtown choreographer Yoshiko Chuma has found inspiration in the Gowanus Canal, with its fetid waters and postindustrial setting. "Sundown," part of a series based on the number seven, includes seven dancers, seven trombonists, and four seven-foot cubes—which the dancers manipulate, displace, rotate, and move through—and will take place over a period of seven hours in and around the Issue Project Room. (400 Carroll St., Brooklyn. 718-330-0313. July 29-30 at 3.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
In flamenco today, you'd be hard pressed to find an act better than Spain's Eva Yerbabuena. Her simply titled "Eva" is a typically tasteful contemporary take on tradition, an elegant revue-style frame for the profound artistry of her dancers, her musicians, and the woman of the title. In the Doris Duke Studio Theatre, Danish Dance Theatre presents two works by its artistic director, Tim Rushton. "Kridt," a riff on passages from Ecclesiastes, completes a trilogy of text-based dances (the first two were performed at the Pillow in 2004). "Silent Steps" oddly juxtaposes voice-over musings about masculinity and femininity with blithe ensemble sequences, shirtlessness, and sign language, all set to Bach harpsichord concertos. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. July 26-30. For complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org. Through Aug. 26.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL: "ERARITJARITJAKA"
Heiner Goebbels, a composer-director-arranger who creates poignant and provocative entertainments based on the music and literature of others, has turned to the writings of Elias Canetti to illuminate some favorite themes: human vanity, the rise and fall of great cities, and the inescapable sense of order that binds societies together. The actor André Wilms performs the work, accompanied by the Mondriaan Quartet (playing excerpts from string quartets by such composers as Shostakovich, Scelsi, Ravel, and George Crumb). (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. July 27-29 at 8.)

INTERNATIONAL KEYBOARD INSTITUTE AND FESTIVAL
July 28 at 5:30: Among the fine pianists who are wrapping up this summer's edition of Jerome Rose's annual round of concerts and workshops is the intriguing young Jie Chen, a player of steely presence and effortless technique; she offers sonatas by Scarlatti and Beethoven, along with Brahms's formidable "Handel Variations." ♦ July 29 at 8: The final concert belongs to the Canadian wonder Marc-André Hamelin, who, true to form, performs an establishment masterpiece (Schubert's Sonata in B-Flat Major, D. 960) along with an underappreciated gem (the sole Sonata, in E-flat minor, of Paul Dukas). (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. 212-580-0210, ext. 4858. For full schedule, see www.ikif.org.)

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL
July 28 at 8: The festival's fortieth-anniversary season, more ambitious than ever, begins with Louis Langrée conducting the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in a preview concert that features Leopold Mozart's "Toy Symphony" along with two symphonies by his famous son—the charming No. 1, K. 16, and the final, magnificent No. 41 ("Jupiter"). (Free tickets, limited to two per customer, will be available at the Avery Fisher Hall box office beginning on July 27 at 10 A.M.) ♦ Aug. 1-2 at 8: Langrée and his band return to Avery Fisher—reconfigured with stage seating, just like last year—for a gala concert including both the "Coronation" Concerto (No. 26, with the pianist Garrick Ohlsson) and the "Coronation" Mass (featuring the vocal soloists Hey-Kyung Hong, Susanne Mentzer, Matthew Polenzani, and John Relyea, along with the Concert Chorale of New York). (212-721-6500.)

BARGEMUSIC
Chamber-orchestra concerts, a happily growing part of the schedule offered at this warm and intimate concert space, dominate the upcoming weekend at the barge, as the violinist Mark Peskanov and the cellist Peter Bruns—and fourteen colleagues—offer a passel of concertos by Haydn (both of the Cello Concertos), Vivaldi, Mozart (the Horn Concerto No. 2 in E-Flat Major), and Bach (the Third Brandenburg). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. July 29 at 7:30 and July 30 at 4. For full schedule, see www.bargemusic.org.)

NEW YORK GRAND OPERA
Central Park's Naumburg Band Shell—an echo of the Roman Pantheon—should be an appropriate setting for a free alfresco performance of **"Tosca,"** an opera in which the city of Rome is as much a character as Tosca, Cavaradossi, and Scarpia (roles filled by Luciana La Monico, Gustavo Lopez Manzitti, and Raemond Martin, respectively). Vincent La Selva, the conductor, is a master of Italian verismo style. (Concert Ground, south of 72nd St. Aug. 1 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

OUT OF TOWN

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
July 27 at 7:30 and July 28 at 8: The young Caramoor Virtuosi, a crack ensemble that includes the violinists Jennifer and Laura Frautschi and the cellist Edward Arron, offers two separate programs featuring an eclectic mix of music by Strauss (the Sextet from "Capriccio"), Berio, Brahms (the String Sextet No. 2), Pärt, and others. ♦ July 29 at 2:30: The first marathon session of the Caramoor Jazz Festival, curated by the estimable Joe Lovano, opens with "Swing Sensations," featuring appearances by the Ravi Coltrane Quartet and the Joe Henderson Project (along with a tribute to Django Reinhardt). ♦ July 30 at 4:30: Peter Oundjian, the festival's principal conductor, wraps up the weekend by leading the Orchestra of St. Luke's in an all-Beethoven concert featuring two of his most spiritual compositions: the Piano Concerto No. 4 (with Jonathan Biss) and the "Pastorale" Symphony. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

TANGLEWOOD
Contemporary music—a cherished cause at Tanglewood since its inception—highlights the coming week. July 27 at 8 and July 28 at 2:30: Three acerbic one-act comedies—Hindemith's **"Hin und Zurück,"** Stravinsky's **"Mavra,"** and Carter's **"What Next?"**—are given fully staged productions (in English) by the young musicians of the Tanglewood Music Center; James Levine conducts the Carter work, in its U.S. stage première. ♦ July 28 at 8:30: George Perle's di-

aphanous "Transcendental Modulations" is featured on a Boston Symphony Orchestra program conducted by Ludovic Morlot that also includes repertory works by Berlioz, Beethoven (the Piano Concerto No. 3, with André Watts), and Ravel ("La Valse"). ♦ July 29 at 8:30: With Levine's departure, normalcy returns in the form of Hans Graf, who conducts the B.S.O. in Beethoven's Violin Concerto (with Gil Shaham) and Stravinsky's complete ballet "The Firebird." ♦ July 30 at 2:30: Graf comes back to the podium to lead the orchestra in works by Mendelssohn (the "Italian" Symphony), Bruch (the Violin Concerto No. 1, with Midori), and Strauss. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200. For a full schedule of the Festival of Contemporary Music, see www.bso.org.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
July 27 at 8: Gilbert and Sullivan's **"Pirates of Penzance,"** featuring Megan Monaghan, Anthony Laciura, and Chad A. Johnson; Gary Thor Wedow conducts. ♦ July 28 at 8: The mezzo-soprano Katharine Goeldner plays the ingénue Rosina in Rossini's deathless **"Barber of Seville,"** in a production led by David Angus. ♦ July 29 at 8 and July 31 at 1:30: Despite its reputation as a progressive house, Glimmerglass is only just now getting to Janáček: a much anticipated production of **"Jenůfa"** by Jonathan Miller features the charismatic American soprano Maria Kanyova in the title role. Stewart Robertson conducts. ♦ July 30 at 1:30: Stephen Hartke, an American composer renowned for his ability to meld the influences of Messiaen, jazz, and medieval music into a serene and confident whole, steps into the operatic realm with **"The Greater Good,"** a treatment of the Maupassant story "Boule de Suif," a bitter tale about the manipulation of a good-hearted prostitute during the Franco-Prussian War. The world-première production features Caroline Worra in the leading role; Robertson. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

BARD SUMMERSCAPE: "GENOVEVA"
Leon Botstein, champion of the underrated, is conducting the first full production in the U.S. of Robert Schumann's only opera, **"Genoveva"** (1850), a gothic romance famous for its ardent lyricism and infamous for its weak dramatic structure. Kasper Bech Holten, a young star director at the Royal Danish Opera, will attempt to compensate with an adventurous production, featuring Ylva Kihlberg and Philippe Castagner in the leading roles. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. July 28 at 8 and July 30 at 3; through Aug. 5.)

MARLBORO FESTIVAL
For more than half a century, some of the world's greatest musicians—and their extremely talented students—have trooped up to a little college campus in Vermont each summer to study and absorb the masterworks of the Germanic classical tradition. Programs are announced a week in advance at www.marlboromusic.org. (Marlboro, Vt. 802-254-2394. July 29 at 8:30 and July 30 at 2:30.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
The Brentano String Quartet, a group that combines an intellectual sensibility with deft and idiosyncratic playing, offers the new String Quartet No. 4 by David Horne along with Mozart's Viola Quintets in B-Flat Major and G Minor (with the violist Hsin-Yun Hwang). (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8172. July 30 at 3.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
Two favorite groups at northwestern Connecticut's string-quartet shrine—the Zemlinsky and the St. Petersburg—gather to play (individually) quartets by Mozart and Smetana (No. 1, "From My Life") along with the string octets by Shostakovich and Mendelssohn. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. July 30 at 3. For full schedule, see www.musicmountain.org.)

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The flutist Marya Martin's elegant festival, bristling with first-rate talent, hits its stride with a concert at the Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church featuring Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" and Dvořák's String Quintet with Double Bass, Op. 77, performed by such musicians as Martin, the cellist Clancy Newman, and the bassist Donald Palma. (631-537-6368. July 30 at 6:30.)

COOPERSTOWN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
A touch of Old World glamour laces Trio Solisti's concert within the stone walls of the Farmer's Museum, in which the group (joined by the festival's director, the flutist Linda Chesis) performs works for piano trio by Rachmaninoff (the "Trio Élégiaque" No. 1), Bizet (an arrangement of "Carmen" tunes), Schubert (the Piano Trio No. 1 in B-Flat Major), and Hilary Tann. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 877-666-7421. Aug. 1 at 7:30.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE ANT BULLY
An animated comedy, directed by John A. Davis, about a boy who is turned into an ant. Opening July 28. (In wide release.)

BROTHERS OF THE HEAD
Keith Fulton and Louis Pepe directed this mockumentary, about conjoined twins who form a rock band. Opening July 28. (IFC Center.)

DARSHAN, THE EMBRACE
A documentary, directed by Jan Kounen, about Mata Amritanandamayi, known as Amma, a guru from India. Opening July 26. (IFC Center.)

I LIKE KILLING FLIES
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening July 28. (Cinema Village.)

JOHN TUCKER MUST DIE
Betty Thomas directed this comedy, starring Jesse Metcalfe and Sophia Bush, about three teen-aged girls who set their ex-boyfriend up with a heart-breaker. Opening July 28. (In wide release.)

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 26. (In wide release.)

MIAMI VICE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 28. (In wide release.)

THE PHOTOGRAPHER, HIS WIFE, HER LOVER
A documentary by Paul Yule, about a scandal surrounding the photographic legacy of O. Winston Link. Opening July 26. (Film Forum.)

SCOOP
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening July 28. (In wide release.)

13 TZAMETI
A contemporary film noir, directed by Géla Babluani, about a young man (George Babluani) who takes on the identity of a mysterious stranger. In French. Opening July 28. (Film Forum.)

NOW PLAYING

CLERKS II
A decade after Kevin Smith's breakout low-budget hit, Dante (Brian O'Halloran) and Randal (Jeff Anderson) are still at the Quick Stop convenience store, but when it burns down Dante says, without a trace of irony, "The Lord did something with that place: He smited that hellhole." They may not have grown up, but they've found God, and they won't stop talking about it. The drug dealers Jay and Silent Bob (Jason Mewes and Smith) are back, too, but Jay now wears a "Got Christ?" T-shirt and peddles a pocket-size Bible along with his nickel bags. Like the 1994 original, the sequel involves endless adolescent potty-mouthing, riffs on pop culture (now blended with Biblical exegesis), and grotesque sexual antics. This time, there's bestiality—euphemized as "inter-species erotica"—as well as a human love story involving Dante, a control freak (Smith's wife, Jennifer Schwalbach), and his boss (Rosario Dawson). Smith clearly has something in mind—a personal Christianity that governs behavior but gives free rein to the expression of fantasy—but he doesn't bring it to life onscreen. The deadpan spontaneity and droll naïveté are gone, replaced by a televangelist's hyperactive salesmanship.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA
The plotting is conventional, and the movie never goes below the surface, but, still, what a surface! Bright and crisp and funny, "Prada" turns dish into the kind of dazzling commercial entertainment that

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Hollywood used to turn out in the days of George Cukor and Stanley Donen. In a triumphantly witty performance, Meryl Streep, never raising her voice, is Miranda Priestly, the terrifying editor of a thick fashion monthly; young Anne Hathaway is the Cinderella figure, who enters the office as Miranda's assistant wearing drab multi-blend sweaters and woollen skirts and gets transformed, after much hazing and many breathless errands, into a fashion princess; and Stanley Tucci, as Miranda's acidulous but kindly second-in-command, teaches the heroine the facts of life. Jess Gonchor's production design features the chaste beiges and whites of impervious authority—even the cars have a slinky insolence—and Patricia Field assembled the clothes (by Blass, Dolce & Gabbana, Galliano, and others). Written by Aline Brosh McKenna, who toughened up Lauren Weisberger's trivially self-regarding 2003 best-seller, and directed, with the right mixture of satire and heartbreak, by David Frankel. With the mop-haired, spaniel-eyed Adrian Grenier, whose boring good nature as the heroine's boyfriend makes us long to get back to the wickedness of the office.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/10 & 17/06.) (In wide release.)

EDMOND

William H. Macy—one can only presume that the H. stands for "Hangdog"—stars as the titular Edmond, who leaves his wife on an unremarkable New York night. He wanders onto the streets and almost immediately into trouble, made worse by a lifetime of inexperience and penny-pinching. If his quest for sexual release is comically thwarted, his acquisition of a knife slides the movie into a darker key: grim news for the waitress (Julia Stiles) who eventually takes him home. David Mamet has adapted his own play for the screen, and you can sense his hand in the sour bruising of the dialogue; but there is still a theatrical plod to the progress of Edmond's decline, and Macy, though unimprovable as a brooding loser, is less convincing as a fount of racist rage. Even if the climax feels fantastical (well suited to the horror-friendly talents of the director, Stuart Gordon), you should stay for the battered irony of the anticlimax, which finds our hero settling down, once again, to the rigors of a regular life. With a cameo from Joe Mantegna, the Mamet specialist.—*Anthony Lane* (7/24/06) (In wide release.)

FAUST

Starting with Satan's wager with God for Faust's soul, F. W. Murnau's 1926 silent film, like Goethe's masterwork, on which it is based, alternates between cosmic and intimate views of life on earth. But even more than the play, the film brings to life the harsh yet gaudy medieval Germany where the story of the radically disaffected scholar (Gösta Ekman), the seductive Mephistopheles (the great Emil Jannings in all his eruptive virtuosity), and the innocent maiden Gretchen (Camilla Horn) takes place. Murnau tells this immortal tale with images of titanic grandeur and exquisite psychological subtlety, but he also tells another story, of his own day: that of the glory of the silent cinema itself. With expressions and costumes derived from the paintings of Cranach and Dürer, swirling flames and celestial gloom of a Wagnerian majesty, and a mercurial visual poetry that channels Goethe's own, Murnau makes his case for the young medium as the supreme art form, with its unique power to conjure up worlds present and beyond with an infinitely touching plausibility.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; July 31.)

GABRIELLE

This intriguingly opaque costume melodrama, based on a story by Joseph Conrad, starts with the discovery by a renowned Belle Époque businessman (Pascal Greggory) that something has gone terribly wrong with his ten-year marriage to the enigmatic Gabrielle (Isabelle Huppert). The rest of the film concerns their attempt to negotiate new terms for their union and to sell it to their social circle. The director, Patrice Chéreau, avoids psychology in favor of intimate pageantry: he establishes the hard, brilliant veneer of the couple's social identity before opening the door to their private, dishevelled vulnerability, and builds the film around the guilty pleasure of spying on public people in their queasy domesticity. The choreographed comings and goings of a phalanx of mobcapped young chambermaids are less a matter of upstairs-downstairs than of inside-outside: what do they know, and whom are they likely to tell? Though the images are often generic, the lead actors, whose tough-minded theatricality is second nature, convey the fear and the heartbreak behind the glossy artifice. In French.—*R.B.* (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HEADING SOUTH

In Haiti, in the late nineteen-seventies, three middle-aged women from North America regularly show up at a minor beach resort in search of sexual companionship with young Haitian men. The awkward subject, rarely explored, could have been played for sensation or squalor. Instead, the writer and director, Laurent Cantet, deals with it plainly and candidly: the women want release, the men want money—but they also want the attention and the respect that they don't get in their violent and careless society. The strongest passages are straight-into-the-camera monologues by two of the women (Charlotte Rampling and Karen Young), describing their response to the touch of a handsome nineteen-year-old (Ménothy Cesar). In French, English, and Creole.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

I LIKE KILLING FLIES

The illustrator and music-video director Matt Mahurin documents a West Village institution—Kenny Shopsin's eponymous restaurant, a tiny hole-in-the-wall stuffed with tchotchkes where Shopsin serves his multifarious nine-hundred-item menu. Mahurin shadows the grumpy, behemoth philosopher as he prepares outlandish concoctions and hurls expletives at the regulars, oscillating between nasty, embittered old man and wise, appreciative purveyor of life lessons. When Shopsin is forced to move his restaurant due to the steeply rising rent, he, his sweet wife, Eve, and their five children, who help run the restaurant, are models of resiliency. They find a semi-suitable replacement down the street, but the vibe just isn't the same, and the loss is poignantly felt.—*Shauna Lyon* (Cinema Village.)

LADY IN THE WATER

M. Night Shyamalan's new fantasy film is one of those catastrophes in which the fiction-making is so strained and feeble that it seems little more than an arrogant delusion. Some sort of translucent goddess-nymph-mermaid (Bryce Dallas Howard), known as a narf, turns up in the swimming pool of an apartment complex outside of Philadelphia, makes an alliance with the building's sad-sack super (Paul Giamatti), and enlists the sympathies of the tenants. After many showers, she tells them their destinies; in return, they try to return her to her native "Blue World." As people stand around explaining to one another what they think is going on, a devil-dog creature, a scrunt, emerges from the woods to menace everyone. Enacted in mediocre cement-block settings, the fantasy never develops any beauty or even a pulse. Giamatti, however, gives it his all; it's a desperately sincere performance. Shyamalan himself plays a writer living in the building whose unfinished book, the narf tells him, will save the world. And Bob Balaban has an amusing bit as a film critic without hope or enthusiasm. At least he won't have to review this movie.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST

This is the second part of a trilogy, Disney having decided that there were dense thematic issues, not to mention narrative niceties, that could not be constrained within a single "Pirates" film; any financial consideration was, of course, entirely secondary. Once again, we accompany Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) as he pursues his fate—or the needle of his compass—across the waters. Keira Knightley resumes her romantic role, as does Orlando Bloom, although his presence is not exactly strong enough to rip a hole in the screen. The director, Gore Verbinski, may marshal the action into some kind of order, but the show is truly run (and strung out) by the special effects; why else would a writhing sea monster, having munched on one ship, come back for a second helping? If the film works, it is largely because of Depp, whose performance owes more

DVD NOTES
TEUTONS OF FUN

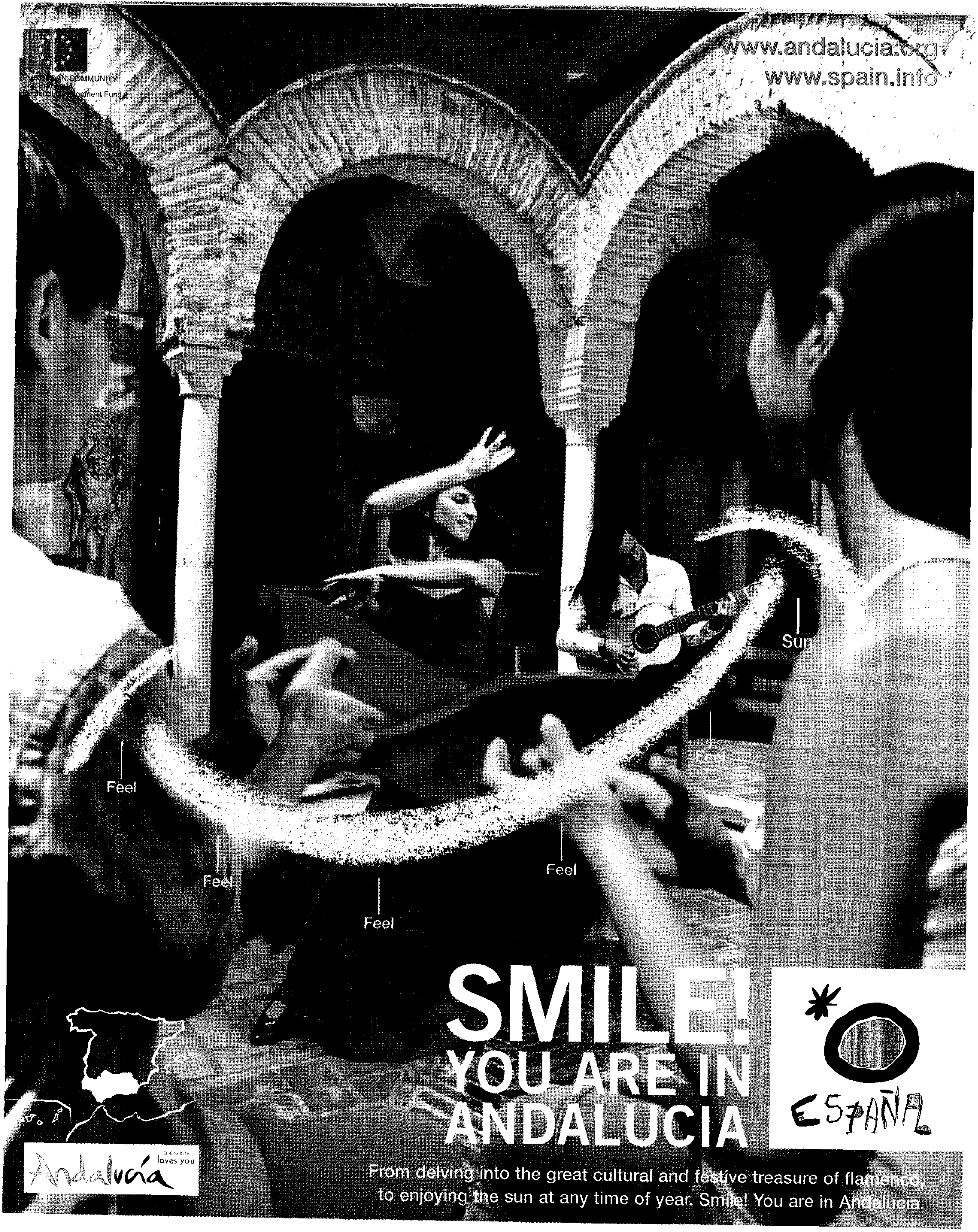
Adolf Hitler galvanized crowds with his spellbinding speeches and took charge of the burgeoning National Socialist Party in 1921. Later that year, the Viennese-born director Fritz Lang, working in Germany, filmed an epic crime drama, "Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler," which Kino has released on DVD in a splendid 270-minute restoration.

In this grand pulp adventure, set in a stylized city of labyrinthine slums and sumptuous pleasure palaces that suggests Berlin, Mabuse (Rudolf Klein-Rogge) practices psychoanalysis as a front for his criminal gang and their spectacular schemes, which involve a counterfeiting ring, vast stock-market manipulations, fleecing and scamming at high-end gambling dens, and murders as needed. A master of disguises, Mabuse also makes use of his professional skills to ensnare his victims with hypnotic suggestion, taking exotic-sounding names like "Tsi-Nan-Fu" and "Melior" and imprinting them in their minds as idées fixes—just as Hitler did with such words as "Jews" and "Communists."

A self-proclaimed revolutionary overthrower of laws and faith, Mabuse boasts that his sole passion, indeed the only true human passion, is the will to power. Through Mabuse's eyes, Lang depicts Germany's chaotic decadence as easily manipulated by a ruthlessly imaginative criminal mastermind and captivating charlatan. His ironic, precise direction brings Mabuse's devastating tours de force to life with a prophetic timeliness.

After the Second World War, in defeated and divided Germany, the lust for power wasn't gone, it had just gone indoors, and the director who captured it with a brazen punk abandon, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, restored the German cinema to international renown. In "Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?" (Fantoma), his fourth film, from 1969, Fassbinder (working with Michael Fengler) presents one Kurt Raab (played by the actor Kurt Raab), a young family man in Munich with a straight yet narrow future as a striving white-collar worker. The story unfolds through long takes of the cast's guided improvisations while the cameraman, Dietrich Lohmann, ranges freely amidst the action. The resulting narrative is stunningly natural yet detached, like a primordial mock documentary. The plot turns catastrophically on Herr R.'s lack of power, and the question of Fassbinder's own directorial authority meshes perfectly if disturbingly with it: in his own way, Herr F. ran amok, too, and in the process did himself in, in 1982, at the age of thirty-seven.

—Richard Brody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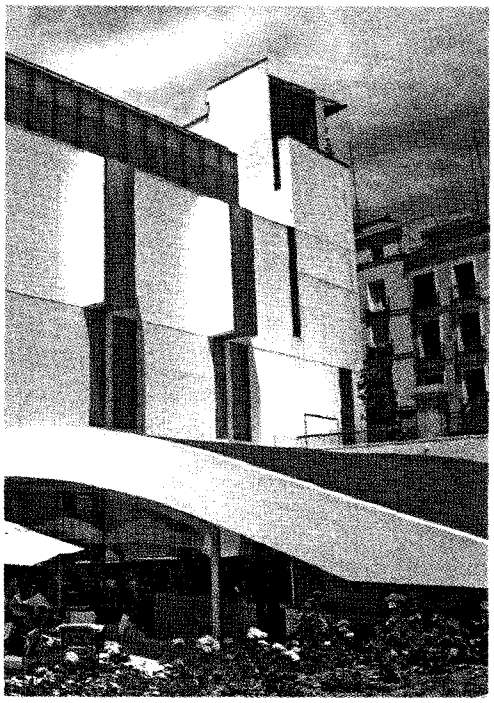
The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 8 Paseo del Prado, is open from 10 A.M. to 7 P.M. Tuesday through Sunday. During July and August, the temporary exhibits will remain open until 11 P.M. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, go to museothyssen.org.

Unique among Madrid's Golden Triangle museums, which include the Prado and Reina Sofia, the **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** stands out for its single-minded point of view. Its core collection, acquired by Spain in 1993, is made up of some eight hundred paintings that once belonged to the industrialist Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza. The Baron's collection is presented chronologically, beginning with an emotion-filled portrait of St. Peter by Simone Martini, painted in the early fourteenth century. Each piece further draws you into the bold intelligence of the collector, who once claimed that his main criterion for buying a painting was whether he enjoyed looking at it.

Among the many Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works that captured the Baron's gaze were portraits by Manet, Morisot, and Degas, along with landscapes by Monet, Gauguin, and Van Gogh. His love of color is evident in selections by Vlaminck, Braque, and Kandinsky. The collection allows its viewers to travel from the Renaissance humanism of Messina's "Portrait of a Man" to the solitude of Edward Hopper's "Hotel Room." By the time visitors arrive at Lucian Freud's portrait of the Baron himself, they will appreciate his contemplative mien.

The Palacio de Villahermosa, a neoclassical-style structure once used by the Prado for temporary exhibitions, was renovated by Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Rafael Moneo to give the artwork a warm setting that is at once modern and stately. A wing added in 2004, displays the collection of the Baron's widow, Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza, which includes Rodin sculptures commissioned by the Baron's grandfather.

This summer, visitors to the museum will delve into the mind of another great collector in **From Cranach to Monet: Masterpieces from the Pérez Simón Collection**, through September 10th. The quality of the works suggests that the Baron had an alter ego in the Mexican businessman Juan Antonio Pérez Simón, but the latter's choices were expressly guided by love of female beauty and nature. Thus, among the fifty-seven paintings, you'll see the grace of a nursing mother in Lucas Cranach the Elder's "Charity" and the sheer sensuality of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Venus Verticordia," as well as the brilliance of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist landscapes.



TOP: ©JAVIER AZURMENDI; BOTTOM: ©CARLOS DOMINGUEZ/CORBIS

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and more to Mary Pickford and less to Douglas Fairbanks. Depp continues to dominate the proceedings, aided in this instance by Bill Nighy, who—together with his animated beard—breathes life into the deceased Davy Jones.—*A.L.* (7/24/06) (In wide release.)

A SCANNER DARKLY
The director Richard Linklater digitally photographed Philip K. Dick's 1977 futuristic-nightmare novel as a movie with actors, then turned the images into animation, adding oscillating colors and shadows. The effect is to make the material—with its paranoid fears about mind-destroying drugs—even more menacing and strange. Keanu Reeves is the dissolving hero, a narc who takes on the personality of an addict; Robert Downey, Jr., is his weirdly overexplicit sidekick; Woody Harrelson is a hysterical goof; and Winona Ryder is a user who may be playing a double game. Some of the movie is startlingly funny, but it luxuriates in a kind of hip despair that may wear out a viewer well before the end.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SCOOP
In Woody Allen's latest, Woody is a cut-rate magician known as the Great Splendini, and Scarlett Johansson, who is charming, is his protégée, Sondra, a college-newspaper reporter who gets a tip on a big story from a dead journalist (Ian McShane) conjured up by Splendini. The conceit is barely tolerable, but it gets the movie under way, and Woody and Scarlett are fitfully amusing as an unlikely pair of sleuths who run around London quarrelling and putting people on in posh houses and private clubs. To enjoy it, however, you have to love Woody's fumbling, stumbling delivery, with its many hesitations and sudden explosions of worry or distaste. At the age of seventy, he's certainly not hiding his crotchets. Hugh Jackman plays a powerful man who may or may not have committed a string of murders.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

A SHOT IN THE DARK
The Inspector Clouseau series peaked early with this homicidal farce, which came right after the soft-boiled detective débuted in "The Pink Panther." Peter Sellers keeps hitting on inspired ways to spark Clouseau's comic fatuity, while the director, Blake Edwards, creates running visual jokes that gambol, gamble, and pay off. Elke Sommer plays a maid named Maria, who is found at a murder scene holding a smoking gun; Clouseau insists on adhering to the facts, then ignores them on the theory that she's shielding somebody. Sellers's slapstick gags are like physical Freudian slips—staring soulfully at Maria, Clouseau sticks a flaming cigarette lighter into his coat pocket. His sham suaveness is uproarious: when Maria worries that he'll catch pneumonia, Clouseau muses, "I probably will, but it's all part of life's rich pageant." Released in 1964.—*Michael Sragow* (Bryant Park; July 31.)

SUPERMAN RETURNS
After a lengthy interlude, the Man of Steel is back. His mission to cleanse the world of evil remains as unswerving as ever, as does his belief that the addition of eyeglasses constitutes a deep disguise. In Bryan Singer's film, he is played by Brandon Routh, who appears to be under instructions to deliver his finest impersonation of Christopher Reeve. Also present are Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth), who has gained a child but lost much of her zip and wit, and Lex Luthor (Kevin Spacey), whose plan to hatch a new landmass made of crystal seems unwieldy even by his standards. The story jerks and drags along, with holes where the funny lines are meant to be, plus a number of enigmas (the true father of Lois's son, for instance) that come across as merely confusing. Nevertheless, comic-book fans will gorge themselves on the set pieces and on the now familiar sight of Spacey playing the devil—silken of voice, bare of morals, and infinitely bored.—*A.L.* (7/3/06) (In wide release.)

"Brothers of the Head," a rock mockumentary, opens July 28.

ZOHAR LAZAR

YOU, ME AND DUPREE
Kate Hudson and the heavy-browed Matt Dillon, who don't really belong together as actors, get married; the newlyweds take into their house a life-loving bum, played by Owen Wilson, who proceeds to wreck the union. The basic premise is slightly offensive: the Wilson character is presented as a test of everyone's humanity, but he's actually a pain in the neck whom anyone in their right mind, and especially newlyweds, would immediately throw out. Wilson runs around bare-assed and is meant to be lovable, which may be a jerk's last illusion. The direction by Anthony and Joe Russo is slightly off in every scene—perhaps because the material never made sense in the first place. With Michael Douglas as Hudson's sourpuss father.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH: In wide release (6/12/06). **LITTLE MAN:** In wide release. **MY SUPER EX-GIRLFRIEND:** In wide release. **THE ROAD TO GUANTÁNAMO:** In wide release (6/26/06).

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Selected screenings. "NewFilmmakers Presents." July 26 at 7:15: "Wannabe" (2005, Richard Keith). ♦ Through Aug. 10: "Kino Summer Series." July 26 at 7: "Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors" (1964, Sergei Paradjanov; in Ukrainian). ♦ July 26 at 9: "Color of Pomegranates" ("Sayat Nova") (1968, Paradjanov; in Russian). ♦ July 27 at 7: "Harvest Time" (2004, Marina Razbezhkina; in Russian). ♦ July 27 at 8:45 and July 30 at 8:30: "Stalker" (1979, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ July 28 at 7: "Mother and Son" (1997, Alexander Sokurov; in Russian). ♦ July 28 at 8:45: "The Mirror" (1975, Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ July 29 at 3: "My Name Is Ivan" (1962, Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ July 29 at 5: "Solaris" (1972, Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ July 29 at 8:30: "Andrei Rublev" (1966, Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ July 30 at 3:15: "My Friend Ivan Lapshin" (1971/85, Alexei Gherman; in Russian). ♦ July 30 at 5:30: "The Sacrifice" (1986, Tarkovsky; in Swedish, French, and English). ♦ July 31 at 7: "The Last Laugh" (1924, F. W. Murnau; silent). ♦ July 31 at 9: "Faust" (†). ♦ Aug. 1 at 7: "La Vie de Bohème" (1992, Aki Kaurismäki; in French). ♦ Aug. 1 at 9:15: "The Match Factory Girl" (1990, Kaurismäki; in Finnish). ♦ "*The Onion* Presents." July 27 at 8: "The Hudsucker Proxy" (1994, Joel Coen).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Great Villains in Cinema." July 26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Touch of Evil" (1958, Orson Welles). ♦ July 27 at 6 and 9: "All About Eve" (1950, Joseph Mankiewicz). ♦ July 28 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Manchurian Candidate" (1962, John Frankenheimer). ♦ July 29 at 4 and 8: "The Godfather: Part II" (1974, Francis Ford Coppola). ♦ July 30 at 4 and 8: "Apocalypse Now Redux" (1979/2001, Coppola). ♦ Through Aug. 29: The films of Sam Peckinpah. Aug. 1 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Ride the High Country" (1962).

BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. between 40th and 42nd Sts. (212-768-4242)—Through Aug. 21: HBO Bryant Park Film Festival. Lawn opens at 5; screening begins at dusk. July 31: "A Shot in the Dark" (†).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. July 26-Aug. 1 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Fanfan la Tulipe" (1952, Christian-Jaque; in French).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—In revival. Aug. 1 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Le Petit Criminel" (1990, Jacques Doillon; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The films of Akira Kurosawa. July 28-30 at noon: "The Lower Depths" (1957; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." July 28-29: "The Beales of Grey Gardens" (2006, Albert and David Maysles).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Films from CalArts. July 26 at 6:15 and July 30 at 1: Recent animation, part 1. ♦ July 26 at 8 and July 30 at 3: Recent animation, part 2. ♦ July 28 at 6 and July 31 at 6: "Home(sick)," short films. ♦ July 28 at 8: "Optic Antics," short films. ♦ July 29 at 4: "Everyone Their Grain of Sand" (2004, Beth Bird) and "Seven Lucky Charms" (1992, Lisa Mann). ♦ July 29 at 8:15: "The (Post) Studio Artists," short films. ♦ July 30 at 5: "In Dreams Begin Responsibility," short films.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Repertory Nights." July 28 at 7:30 and July 29-30 at 6:30: "La Dolce Vita" (1960, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Through Aug. 20: The films of Frank Borzage. July 29 at 2: "7th Heaven" (1927), introduced by the film historian Ross Melnick. ♦ July 29 at 4:30: "Street Angel" (1928). ♦ July 30 at 4:30: "History Is Made at Night" (1937). ♦ "Fist and Sword." July 30 at 2: "District B13" (2004, Pierre Morel; in French).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Selected screenings. "Female Film." July 27 at 9: "Soundz of Spirit" (2003, Joslyn Rose Lyons) and "B-Girl" (2005, Emily Dell). ♦ July 28 at 7: "Turning a Corner" (2006, Salome Chasnoff) and "Charisse Shumate" (2005, Eve Goldberg and Claude Marks). ♦ July 29 at 9: "Nazrah: A Muslim Woman's Perspective" (2003, Farah Nousheen) and "Me and the Mosque" (2005, Zarqa Nawaz). ♦ July 30: Short films by Marie Losier.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." July 28-29: "Blow-Up" (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. July 29-30 at 5: "The Mating Season" (1956, Mitchell Leisen). July 29-30 at 7: "All About Eve" (1950, Joseph Mankiewicz).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The New York Video Festival. Short-subject programs. July 26 at 4 and July 30 at 6: "Alternative Anime Strikes Back." ♦ July 26 at 6 and July 29 at 2: "Mediated Media." ♦ July 26 at 8:30: "Believe the Hype," music videos by Hype Williams, presented by the critic Armond White. ♦ July 27 at 4 and July 29 at 6: "The Magic Bus." ♦ July 27 at 6: "The Mind/Body Program." ♦ July 27 at 8:30: "Miracles in Reverse." ♦ July 28 at 2 and July 29 at 4: "At Play in the Fields . . ." ♦ July 28 at 4 and July 30 at 2: "Animate!" ♦ July 28 at 6: "Hot Stuff." ♦ July 28 at 8:30: "Spectropia." ♦ July 29 at 8:30: Films and performance by Charles Atlas. ♦ July 30 at 4: "Marching to a Different Toon." ♦ July 30 at 8: "The 4th Screen: Please Turn On Your Cell Phones," an interactive program.

READINGS AND TALKS

JOHN JONAS GRUEN
To mark the republication of "The Sixties: Young in the Hamptons," the photographer presents slides of Willem de Kooning, John Ashbery, Larry Rivers, Truman Capote, and other subjects. With Richard Barons, the director of the East Hampton Historical Society. (192 Books, Tenth Ave. at 21st. St. No tickets necessary. July 25 at 7.)

"BREAKFAST UNDER THE STARS"
The novelists Amanda Stern and Darin Strauss read selections from Truman Capote's "Breakfast at Tiffany's." (Madison Square Park, Fifth Ave. at 23rd St. No tickets necessary. July 27 at 6:30.)

JAMES GREER
The Los Angeles-based writer, a former member of the rock band Guided by Voices, reads from his first novel, "Artificial Light," in which a rock star named Kurt C— moves to Dayton, Ohio, before his apparent suicide, in 1994. (McNally Robinson Booksellers, 52 Prince St. No tickets necessary. July 27 at 7.)

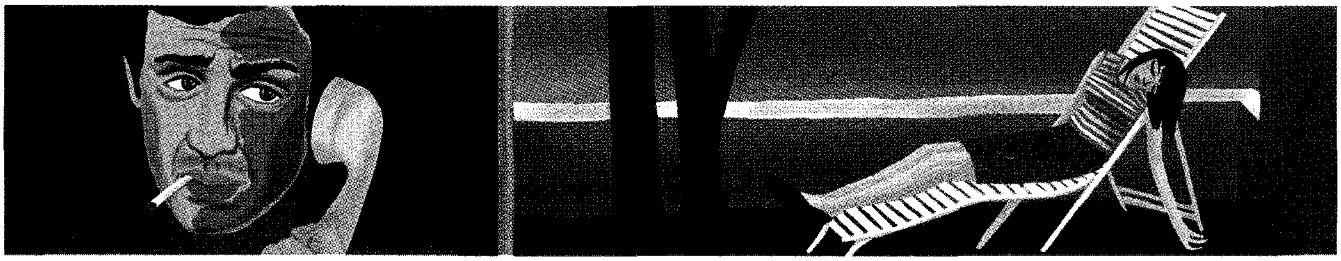
POETS HOUSE
David Wallace, a professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, has organized an off-site night dedicated to Chaucer, with the poets Susan Stewart, Caroline Bergvall, and Charles Bernstein. (Lowenstein Lounge, Fordham University, Lincoln Center, 113 W. 60th St. For more information, call 212-431-7920. July 28 at 8.)

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
Thelma Schoonmaker, the widow of the director Michael Powell and a noted film editor, introduces a screening of her late husband's film "The Thief of Bagdad," a special-effects-laden Technicolor Oscar winner, from 1940. (150 W. 17th St. 212-620-5000. July 28 at 9:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"OPIUM LITERARY DEATH MATCH"
The roving reading series "Park Lit," which presents writers from various literary magazines in public spaces, moves to Tompkins Square Park for what promises to be one of the summer's more entertaining literary events. The comedian Jack Kukoda hosts an evening in which competitors read, in ten minutes or less, their humorous stories before a panel of judges. The participants include Todd Zuniga, the founding editor of *Opium* magazine, Elizabeth Koch, an editor at *Opium*, and Ben Greenman, an editor at this magazine. (E. 7th St. between Avenues A and B. 212-696-6609. July 26 at 6:30.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
As thoughts turn to surf and sand, **Christie's** taps into such watery reveries for a nautically themed sale (July 27), offering model ships, photographs, telescopes, ship's bells, and scores of maritime paintings. The latter category features a picture of a ship caught in a gale on the high seas by James Edward Buttersworth, a view of New York Harbor by L. Meyer, and a dreamy depiction of Lord Nelson's flagship Victory emerging from the haze at dawn, one of five paintings in the sale by perhaps the most popular of maritime painters, Montague Dawson (whose work recently brought a new record price at an auction at this same house). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)



DIVYA SRINIVASAN

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
LES HOMMES

Aug. 3-27

BAM's series of French films built around great leading men includes some of the cinema's all-time classics, such as Jean Renoir's "Boudu Saved from Drowning," from 1932, starring Michel Simon as an anarchic clochard; "Pierrot le Fou," Jean-Luc Godard's terminally romantic crime drama, starring Jean-Paul Belmondo; and Jean Eustache's "The Mother and the Whore," starring Jean-Pierre Léaud. (718-636-4100.)

THE THEATRE
STILL STANDING

Aug. 11

Following a sold-out Carnegie Hall concert, a tour with the Scissor Sisters, and a gig at the Sydney Opera House, the fabulously decrepit Kiki (Justin Bond) and her loyal sidekick, Herb (Kenny Mellman), bring their mock-cabaret act to Broadway for a four-week run at the Helen Hayes Theatre. (212-239-6200.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
LONG LISZT

Aug. 11-13 and Aug. 18-20

Leon Botstein's Bard Music Festival—once an academic curiosity, now a leviathan in its seventeenth year—celebrates the music of Franz Liszt in two tightly scheduled weekends of concerts and symposia, featuring the American Symphony Orchestra. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
DEMI-RUN

Aug. 27

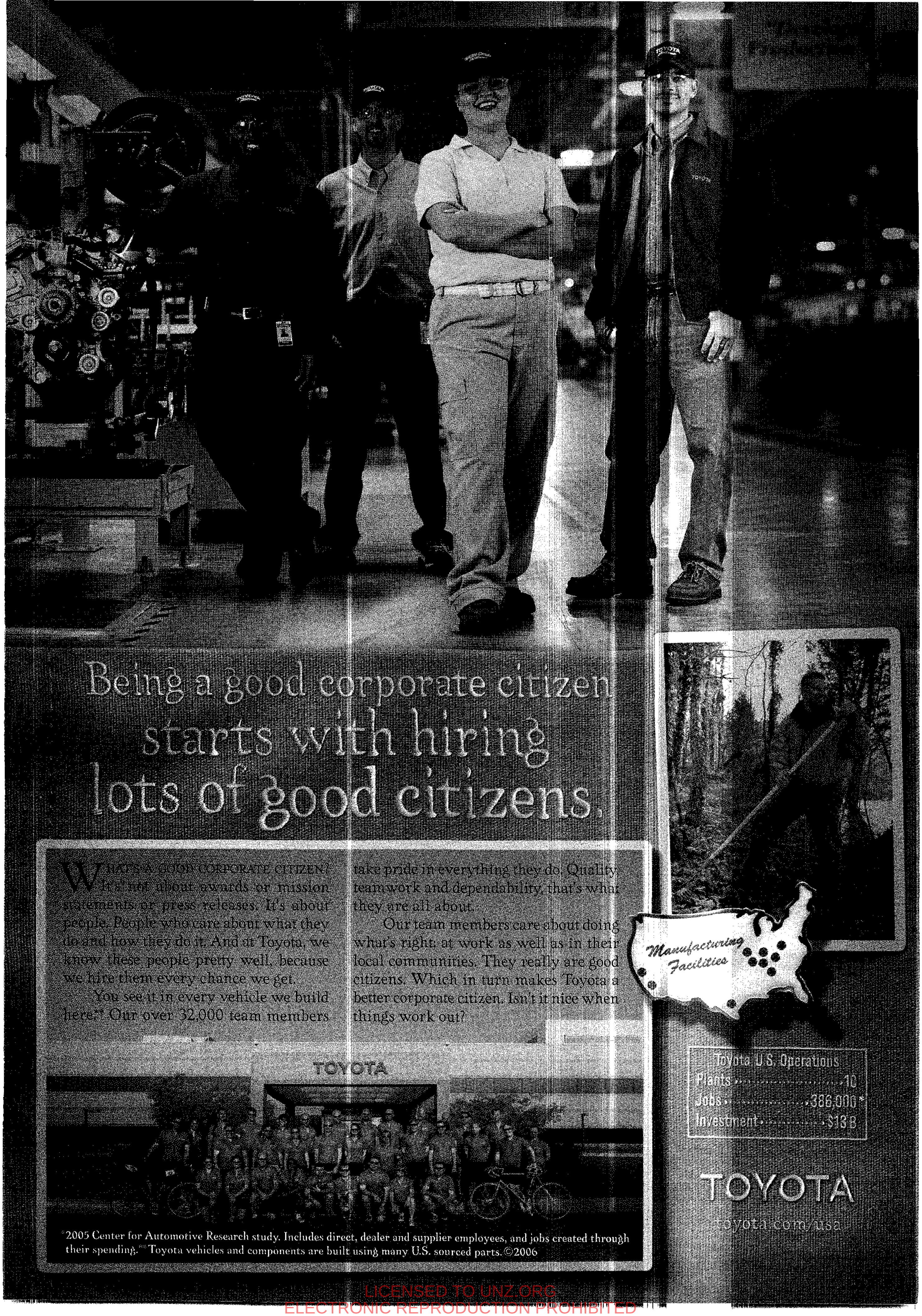
The first-ever New York City Half-Marathon starts with a loop of Central Park and finishes up in Battery Park City. More than ten thousand runners are expected to compete. (www.nyrr.org.)

ART
THE PATRON'S EYE

Sept. 14-Jan. 4

Ambroise Vollard (1867-1939) opened his Paris gallery in 1893, where he quickly proved to be a brilliant anticipator of the new age by giving Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso their first solo shows. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's comprehensive tribute will survey the work of artists he championed, who also included Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Bonnard. (212-535-7710.)

"Pierrot le Fou" and other classics of French cinema, at BAM in August.



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OFFICIAL SELECTION
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KIM DAVIS-WAGNER AND JUSTINE BADDELEY NANCY STEINER MYCHAEL DANNA DEVOTCHKA SUSAN JACOBS ANNE LITT PAMELA MARTIN KALINA IVANOV
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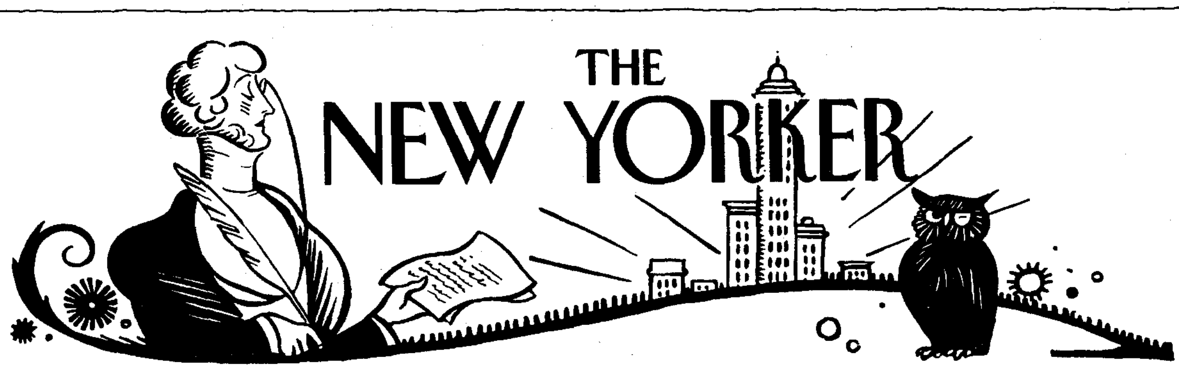
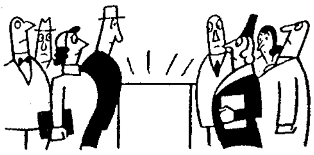


THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
DANGER LEVELS

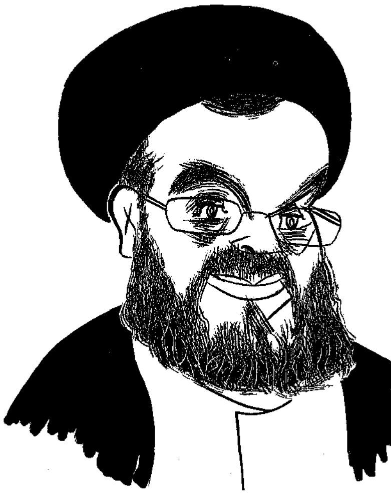


Just four months ago, following the incapacitation of Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert was elected Prime Minister of Israel. The hopeful narrative of his campaign was that of a career hard-liner who, like the great majority of Israelis, had finally come to believe that his country's occupation of the more than three and a half million Palestinian Arabs in Gaza and the West Bank was morally untenable, spiritually corrosive, and politically senseless. Olmert comes from an activist family that believed in the Greater Israel ideology of Vladimir Jabotinsky. He was a "Likud prince," a champion of the mass-settlement project. But, in the footsteps of Sharon, who had closed the settlements of Gaza, Olmert declared his intention to extend the process known as "disengagement" to most (if not enough) of the West Bank. In the early weeks of his premiership, his greatest concern seemed to be how best to time the withdrawals and avoid any clashes between his own police and the most zealous of the settlers. Because the process lacked a Palestinian partner, the disengagement plan was too peremptory to promise a final settlement, but at least it suggested progress toward the sole mutually acceptable resolution of the historic conflict—two viable states, side by side, in a lasting, if uneasy, peace.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

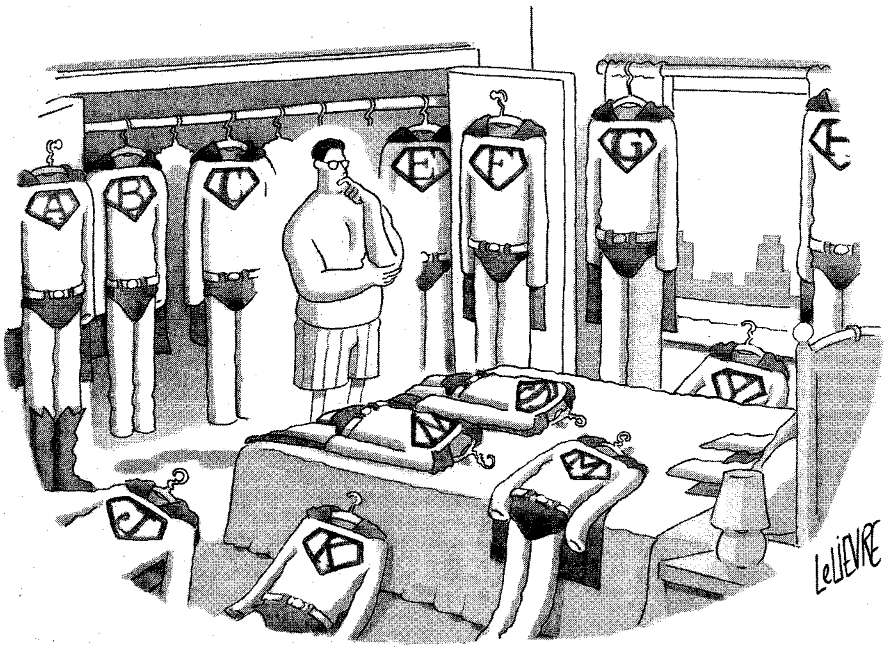
That strand of Middle Eastern optimism is now a memory. Olmert is fighting a war on two fronts—in Gaza against Hamas and in Lebanon against a large and sophisticated Hezbollah militia—and it is entirely possible, if sense and diplomacy do not quickly intercede, that the region, already inflamed by the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq and the murderous insurgency that has followed, will face a danger level not seen in decades. By the end of last week, a ground war seemed imminent. Some observers speak forebodingly of 1914, but the most immediate result of this war will likely be to undermine the Israeli consensus for territorial compromise with the Palestinians, shatter the fragile Lebanese polity, and radicalize more Muslims in the region and beyond.

Much of the Israeli public has concluded that a policy of territorial retreat only emboldened the militias on their borders. After the Israel Defense Forces withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, many had hoped that Hezbollah, which was born in reaction to the Israeli invasion in 1982, would transform itself into a conventional political party, a peaceful champion of the Shiite underclass. Instead, it built up its arsenal and accelerated its attacks across Israel's northern border. Similarly, after Israel withdrew from Gaza last year, Palestinian fighters, with the encouragement of the new Hamas government, lobbed more than seven hundred rockets into Sderot and other towns in southwest Israel.



Olmert had to respond. But he has done so in a way that pleases his enemies while bringing despair to countless innocents. Israel's intention is to disarm the militias, to protect the citizens of Haifa, Afula, and Safed, but its attacks have killed hundreds of Lebanese, many of them civilians. Hundreds of thousands have fled their homes in fear. Israeli bombs have also demolished significant parts of the Lebanese infrastructure: the landing strips of Beirut, grain silos, roads, fuel storage, apartment buildings. Food and medical supplies are running short. Such is the vanity—and the inevitable result—of "surgical" strikes. Israel can neither morally nor politically finish this mission on its own. The Party of God, for its part, uses civilians as both shields and targets, and boasts of its own escape.

The Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, has denounced the scale of the Israeli counterattack, saying that he will ask for compensation for his country's losses, and has rightly appealed to the United Nations, Europe, and the United States



to broker a ceasefire. He has also described the powerlessness of his national government before Hezbollah in the most plaintive terms. Hezbollah, he told an interviewer for Milan's *Corriere della Sera* last week, had created a "state within a state," adding, "It's not a mystery that Hezbollah answers to the political agendas of Tehran and Damascus." The Lebanese government has been simply too weak to deal with it, much less to fulfill the section of Resolution 1559 of the U.N. Security Council which calls for the mandatory disarmament of all militias in Lebanon.

When the conflict first erupted, the governments of Egypt, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia were only mildly critical of Israel's response. More surprising, they denounced Hezbollah for its cross-border raids, its rocket fire, and its kidnappings of Israeli soldiers. The Sunni Arab states fear the rise of a "Shiite crescent" from Iran through Iraq and on to Bekaa. But, as the body count mounts and the destruction in Lebanon increases, that political balancing act will collapse, and the very sort of anti-Israeli fury that Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, has been counting on will surely grow.

Among the more vexing questions of this war is what to do about its likely instigator: the government in Tehran. Iran's Revolutionary Guards first came to Lebanon in 1982 to help arm and train Hezbollah, which then, according to its foes, carried out a string of horrific attacks, including the killing of two hundred and forty-one American servicemen in Beirut and the bombing of the Israeli Embassy and a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. Hamas has benefitted from similar assistance. Both groups have lately gained a large measure of power at the ballot box even as they receive military and strategic support from a country that is defiantly developing a nuclear weapon and openly advertises its hopes for the destruction of Israel. "The final point of liberal civilization is the false and corrupt state that has occupied Jerusalem," the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said on Iranian television last week. "That's what all those who talk about liberalism and support it have in common." Hossein Shariatmadari, the managing editor of *Kayhan*, a newspaper affiliated with the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, recently wrote that the annihilation of Israel "is not only a religious and national duty, but also a universal human duty, from which no Muslim or free human being can be exempt."

So far, the performance of the Western diplomatic world has been bewildering. Kofi Annan has been slow to act and his warnings have been ineffectual. President Bush flashed Israel a rhetorical green light and then, after a cringe-making performance at the G-8 summit in St. Petersburg, where he deflected a reporter's serious question about Lebanon with frat-boy joshing, flew home to veto a stem-cell-research bill. It was left to the French President, Jacques Chirac, to call most clearly for a ceasefire, a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and the implementation of Resolution 1559, "on the clear understanding—and all the Lebanese have to understand and recognize this—that there cannot be a politically stable Lebanon shouldering her responsibilities and pursuing her development, a democratic Lebanon, if part of her territory is occupied by militia who do not obey the central Lebanese government."

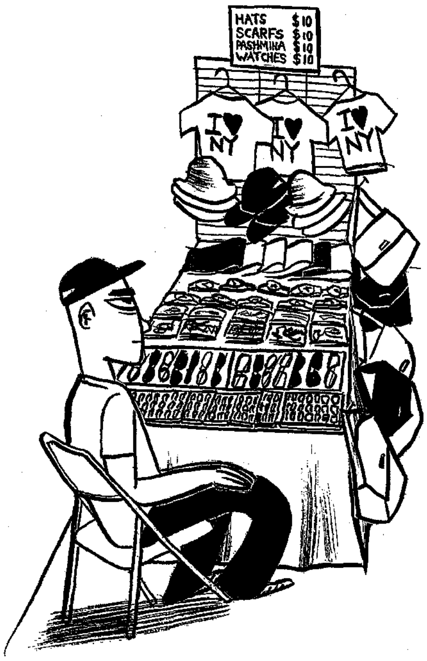
To distract the world from its nuclear ambitions and to keep conflict alive in the Middle East, Iran, through its client militia in Lebanon, has indulged in a provocation of the most dangerous kind. Now its opponents face a challenge that demands endurance and strategic calculation, an unwillingness to fall further into a trap where politics ends and the forces of chaos inevitably triumph.

—*David Remnick*

THE CIVIL SERVICE VENDER VIGILANTE

When Councilman Alan Gerson walks the streets of his district, which covers most of downtown Manhattan below Houston, he hardly notices the pleasant cafés, cast-iron buildings, and hip boutiques. He sees "vending anarchy": peddlers everywhere, jostling for space along the already overcrowded sidewalks, posing a threat to public safety, sanitation, and peace of mind. Gerson is a problem solver by nature, so he has convened a task force to bring some order to the vending situation, and the other day, with temperatures in the nineties, he set out to illustrate the intractability of the problem. He had on jeans, a plaid shirt, and a baseball cap, with a sports jacket slung over his arm. First stop: an air-conditioned café on Houston Street.

By Gerson's count, there are more than a dozen kinds of street peddlers. "You have veteran venders, and you have disabled veteran venders," he said. "Those are different categories of licenses, and they can sell anything. Then you have pushcart venders, licensed by the Department of Health." (Hot dogs, Italian ice.) "Then you have non-pushcart food-produce venders. Then you have legal, unlicensed venders who sell merchandise covered by the First Amendment." (Art work, Jesus figurines.) "Then you have non-First Amendment craft venders who often claim that they should be protected by the First Amendment." (Peace-sign necklaces, Che Guevara coffee mugs.) "Then you have legitimate general-merchandise venders." (Would-be pashminas, calling cards.) "Then, of course, you have unlicensed venders of legitimate general merchandise. And then you have unlicensed rip-off venders." (Fake Rolexes, "Da Vinci Code" bootlegs.) "Then you have merchandise venders who hire veterans just to be there so they can claim veteran privilege. Then you have the issue, in our district, of Ground Zero venders who are trying to sell memorabilia and tribute-type merchandise. Oh, and then you have the stoop-line venders." Gerson looked at his chief of staff, Tammy To, and asked, "Did I leave anything out?"



A group of elderly women with perms—Gerson's constituents—stopped by to pay their respects. "Whoa, this is tight—fire hazard," Gerson said as they left, scooting his chair to make room. He pointed at an empty lemonade glass on the table, as a way of showing the difficulty in vender-related policing: "A vender says, 'You know, this is an article of religious worship.' The Lemon Worshippers. There are all sorts of folks out there—very legitimate faiths, which have objects like this."

Suitably hydrated, the Councilman decided to brave the heat for phase two: a walking tour. He headed south on West Broadway, where at least a dozen painters had set up shop. "Some of the venders have proposed calling it a 'Boulevard for the Arts,' " he said. "But the artists who actually live here are vehement about rejecting it."

One of Gerson's primary issues is that venders in the city are not necessarily poor, as many assume, and therefore are not in need of special protection. He took a business card belonging to an artist, and looked at the phone number. "Six-three-one is a Long Island area code," he said. "It actually includes the Hamptons. So these are people who are clearly coming in from far and wide and using our streets. You're not a struggling immigrant peasant if you live in the 631 area."

He moved on, visibly sweating. "On a spring or fall day, the sidewalks would be impassable," he said. But on this day only city officials and kooks, such as a woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat made of red feathers and a white boa, seemed to be out and about. At the corner of Prince Street, Gerson called to one of the venders, a painter named Jill Stasium. "How are you?" he asked.

"Not super great, actually," she said. "I was going to try to find you."

A local resident had been running over her paintings with his bike, and a police lieutenant had recently asked her to pack up and move along, citing a rule that forbids non-veterans from vending within twenty feet of a store entrance. "I believe that since the First Amendment is a federal law, we aren't restricted by local ordinances," she said. "But there's no business out here anyway. It's drying up. Maybe it's gas prices? It's not like it used to be."

Gerson turned left on Prince and started walking east. "This is clearly a level of intensity that is not acceptable," he said, gesturing to the assorted pocketbook and jewelry dealers. "Then you have the stands that sell the back issues of *Penthouse*, *Hustler*, and all those." He paused a moment. "Some people would say those enhance the neighborhood."

At the corner of Broadway, he stopped to mop his brow. "There you have a police officer doing absolutely nothing to enforce vender regulations," he said, pointing to a cop near a subway entrance. "She's surrounded by violations."

The police officer, wisely, was standing under some scaffolding, in the shade.

—*Ben McGrath*

BEIRUT POSTCARD
CHANGE OF PLANS

In "The Chronicles of Narnia," the four Pevensie children are evacuated from London during the Blitz and sent to stay with an elderly professor in a house in the countryside. Last Wednesday evening, in an old Ottoman villa in West Beirut, Skandar Keynes, the fourteen-year-old actor who played Edmund Pevensie in last year's film of "Narnia," his mother, Zelfa, and his grandfather, Cecil Hourani, were packing their things and getting ready to evacuate. Two days before the Israeli attacks on Hezbollah began, on July 12th, they had arrived from Britain for their annual summer holiday in Lebanon, and had found themselves stranded there along with thousands of other foreign tourists. They had, in fact, been about to leave Beirut for the Hourani ancestral home in the ancient town of Marjeyoun, near the frontier with Israel. Marjeyoun is very close to the current fighting, and before being taken over by Hezbollah it had been the longtime headquarters of the Christian militia. Except for 2004, when Skandar was filming "Narnia" and the family decamped with him to the set in New Zealand, he has spent every summer of his life there.

Outside the walls of the villa, closely packed modern tower blocks rose all around. It is a noisome neighborhood of narrow streets jammed with people, scooters, and men pushing carts. Quite a few women wear head scarves. On a building in the next block a large banner in support of Sheikh Nasrallah could be seen. A half an hour before they were due to leave Beirut, Zelfa packed the car with their belongings, and Cecil waited by the front door, clearly edgy about the night journey ahead. Skandar chatted in the living room, a place of high timbered ceilings and flaking plaster, adorned with bronze pots and Chinese painted-silk panels of peacocks.

Skandar, a slim, handsome boy with tousled dark hair, was wearing a "Scarface" T-shirt over baggy shorts and blue canvas Vans. He said he had been looking forward to Marjeyoun, where he planned to spend his days swimming and reading. He had brought along his guitar, and hoped to catch up on some movies. "I don't turn fifteen until September, and back in England I can only go to under-fifteens, which is frustrating," he said. "Here in Lebanon they don't care about age limits, and I can see any movies I like." The day after Beirut's airport was bombed, he'd gone to the cinema in Beirut where the new "Pirates of the Caribbean" was supposed to première; the theatre owners had turned him away, explaining that they hadn't been able to fly in the reel. He added that he was a big fan of Johnny Depp. "He's the man," he said.

Skandar's grandfather, Cecil, is a well-known writer on the Middle East; Cecil's late brother, Albert Hourani, was the noted Oxford scholar and author of "A History of the Arab Peoples." (Both brothers were born in Britain to émigré parents, but never relinquished their links with their homeland.) Although he was educated in England, Cecil still regards himself as Lebanese: "Being born in England didn't make you English, at least not in my generation," he said. With a glance at his grandson, he added, "Perhaps that has changed now, I don't know." Zelfa, Cecil's daughter, is married to the British writer Randal Keynes, a great-great-grandson of Charles Darwin and a great-nephew of John Maynard Keynes. Skandar, who attends the City of London School for Boys, is one of their two children.

"I'm very proud of being Lebanese, and its history and everything," Skandar said. "And I love coming here every summer." He doesn't speak Arabic all that well, he confessed, despite attending weekend Arabic classes for several years.

When Skandar was out of earshot, Zelfa said that she wasn't particularly frightened, although her face betrayed her nervousness; for several days, the noise from huge blasts had ricocheted through the city, rocking the walls of the villa; their neighborhood had been spared, but much of the city had been shut down. Speaking of Skandar, she said, "He's just a boy, after all; there's only so long we can stay here like this, with nothing for him to do."

Neither Zelfa nor her father was eager to join the mass evacuation of Beirut's foreigners by ship, which had begun a couple of days earlier. They were also worried about travelling overland, as some people were doing, to Syria and Jordan, because they had heard that the roads were being bombed, and there were said to be long queues at the Syrian border. But on Wednesday some friends had found a driver who could take them out by night. They had been told they could get to Amman in six or seven hours.

Skandar had not thought much about the parallels between the role he played in "Narnia" and his own situation in Beirut. "Maybe it's because one was acting and this is real," he said. When the bombing had begun, he had been scared, like everyone, but his grandfather had done a good job of reassuring him. "Now I can say I have been in a real war zone," he said, and gave a mock swagger.

Skandar's grandfather came over and said in a low, tight voice that some men, possibly Hezbollah followers, had just come to the door to ask who his visitors were and, incidentally, who he was. Until now, he said, the family had mostly avoided attention in the neighborhood. It was time to go.

—*Jon Lee Anderson*

UP FOR GRABS
FIFTEEN BOXES

Roy Goodman had some boxes to give away. Last fall, he and his wife, Sarah Berger, moved from a one-bedroom apartment in the Garment District to a somewhat larger one-bedroom in Boerum Hill, in order to accommodate their new son, Noah. So Goodman, an assistant professor of mathematics at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, posted an ad on the "free" section of Craigslist, offering to give the boxes to whoever sent in the best haiku on the topic of moving. His ad reminded readers that a haiku traditionally contains a reference to the season, and he added that this was "encouraged, but not required."

Seven box-seeking poets responded. Among them was Marissa Kraft, who was preparing to move from Carroll Gardens to Red Hook. She wrote:

'Tis autumn, change comes
Must move my bottom and pack
Woe to me, boxless

Kraft, a medical editor, said that her move was prompted by a troublesome landlady. "She blames everything on me and keeps leaving these incomprehensible messages on my answering machine," Kraft said. She regretted that she was unable to squeeze anything about the landlady into the haiku. "I could probably write a novel about her," she said.

Toni Scofield, a singer and pianist, also answered the ad:

The leaf descends on
Moving boxes, empty now;
Devoid of dishes

As it happens, Scofield was not moving and therefore did not need boxes. She just thought the contest was a neat idea. If she had won, Scofield said, she would have given the boxes to the runner-up: "That way I could win and be generous."

But she didn't win. That honor belongs to James Lola, who submitted the following haiku:

Building has been sold
Fourteen years of things to pack
Leaves fall, hope must rise

Lola, who works for the Department of Education, doesn't consider himself a poet but said that he has "always had a very good grasp of the language." He and his wife and two children were about to move out of a brownstone in Carroll Gardens. They have since rented a two-bedroom apartment in Windsor Terrace. The fifteen free boxes they got from Goodman accommodated about a quarter of their boxable belongings.

Goodman said the details in Lola's haiku set it apart from the others. "He managed to tell a story, and he sounded wistful," Goodman said. "I don't know; I think my wife liked that one best."

—*Tom Bartlett*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE

THE FATAL-FLAW MYTH

Every other summer, the aerospace industry gathers in Farnborough, England, for a big trade show. At Farnborough last week, there was one thing on everyone's mind: the plummeting fortunes of Airbus, the European aerospace giant. Airbus is struggling to find customers for the new plane on which it has staked its future, the superjumbo A380, as airlines wonder whether anyone wants to fly on a jet that seats almost six hundred people. The A380s that have already been ordered will be delivered late, thanks to production snafus that may add as much as $2.6 billion to the original development cost of thirteen billion dollars. Airbus's other big project, the mid-size A350, is to be completely redesigned, at a cost of ten billion dollars. All the while, its sole competitor, Boeing, has been gobbling up business, thanks to its new mid-size jet, the 787 Dreamliner. In the first half of the year, Boeing took almost five hundred new orders for planes, while Airbus took just a hundred and seventeen.

Airbus is a business-world anomaly. It was created in 1970, by an alliance of European countries, in order to break the American monopoly on the commercial-aircraft market, and it's currently owned by a defense conglomerate in which the French government has a major stake. This connection has helped the company get access to government-subsidized loans, but has also meant that its corporate strategies have been shaped by politics. Now Airbus's woes are being held up as proof that it is, in the words of one columnist, "a textbook example of how not to run a commercial enterprise." The *Wall Street Journal* explained that Airbus was failing because of its "politicized management," while the *Times* suggested that Airbus had to decide whether it was a company or a European "employment project."

There are reasons to think that politics and business shouldn't mix, but Airbus's predicament isn't one of them. What much of the talk about the inherent weakness of Airbus ignores is that, just a few years ago, it was Boeing that looked fundamentally flawed, while Airbus was seen as the future of the industry. Beginning in the late nineties, Boeing's commercial-aircraft business went into a long and nearly profitless slump. In 2001, Airbus surpassed Boeing in new orders, a lead it maintained until this year. During that period, Airbus's unusual structure was praised; its insulation from the stock market supposedly allowed it to invest in long-term research and development. Boeing, by contrast, was thought to be trapped in a short-term, cost-cutting mentality, because, as one analyst put it, "the money guys don't reward long-term thinking and investment." In 2003, *Business Week* declared that Boeing was "choking on Airbus' fumes," and warned that Boeing's "slip to No. 2 could become permanent."

MARC ROSENTHAL

The problem with such prognostications is that they infer basic truths about a company's prospects from its short-term performance. In fact, present success is often determined as much by context and chance as by fundamental viability. This is particularly true of the aerospace industry, because success is heavily dependent on a small number of big gambles. If you bet right, you look like a genius for a few years, even if the success of your bet was due to factors out of your control. The 787 may now look like Boeing's salvation, but Boeing built it only after more ambitious plans—for a plane, known as the Sonic Cruiser, that would have been the fastest passenger jet in the air—fell through, partly because of the slowdown in air travel after September 11th. And had Boeing not been in such straits in 2003 it probably wouldn't have risked the investment required for the 787.

People are generally bad at accepting the importance of context and chance. We fall prey to what the social psychologist Lee Ross called "the fundamental attribution error"—the tendency to ascribe success or failure to innate characteristics, even when context is overwhelmingly important. In one classic demonstration, people shown a person shooting a basketball in a gym with poor lighting and another person shooting a basketball in a gym with excellent lighting assume that the second person hit more shots because he was a better player. This problem is compounded by the tendency to extrapolate big conclusions from small samples, something that behavioral economists call "the law of small numbers." In the decade or so that Airbus has been a serious competitor to Boeing, this is its first really bad patch, and its difficulties are due mainly to making one bad bet while Boeing made one good one. That's a minuscule sample size on which to base any kind of conclusion. But this is exactly what we like to do: sports fans assume that a few excellent performances are proof of a player's underlying ability, while investors assume that a mutual fund's record over one year is a reliable indicator of the manager's skill.

Because we underestimate how much variation can be caused simply by luck, we see patterns where none exist. It's no wonder that management theory is dominated by fads: every few years, new companies succeed, and they are scrutinized for the underlying truths that they might reveal. But often there is no underlying truth; the companies just happened to be in the right place at the right time. In 1999, after all, it was hard to find a business book that didn't hold up Enron as the embodiment of one important principle or other. Of course, some strategies and structures work better than others, but real meaning emerges only over the long term. Let's give Airbus a few more years of floundering before we decide that it should be put out of its misery.

—*James Surowiecki*

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HOLLYWOOD BOWL

THE POLITICAL SCENE

HOLY TOLEDO

Ohio's gubernatorial race tests the power of the Christian right.

BY FRANCES FITZGERALD

Pastor Rod Parsley stood on a flag-bedecked dais on the steps of Ohio's Statehouse last October and, amid cheers from the crowd below, proclaimed the launch of "the largest evangelical campaign ever attempted in any state in America." A nationally known televangelist and the leader of a twelve-thousand-member church on the outskirts of Columbus, Parsley had gathered a thousand people for the event, and attracted bystanders with a multimedia performance involving a video on a Jumbotron and music by Christian singers and rappers broadcast so loud that it reverberated off the tall buildings south of the Statehouse. TV crews from Parsley's ministry taped the event. "Sound an alarm!" he boomed. "A Holy Ghost invasion is taking place. Man your battle stations, ready your weapons, lock and load!" In the course of the performance, Parsley promised that during the next four years his campaign, Reformation Ohio, would bring a hundred thousand Ohioans to Christ, register four hundred thousand new voters, serve the disadvantaged, and guide the state through "a culture-shaking revolutionary revival."

Among those who spoke at the rally were Senator Sam Brownback, of Kansas, and Representative Walter B. Jones, of North Carolina, both Christian conservatives, and J. Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio's secretary of state, who is now the Republican nominee for governor. All talked about the need to bring God and morality back into government. "We refuse to give up or back up or shut up until we've made a better world for all," Blackwell said.

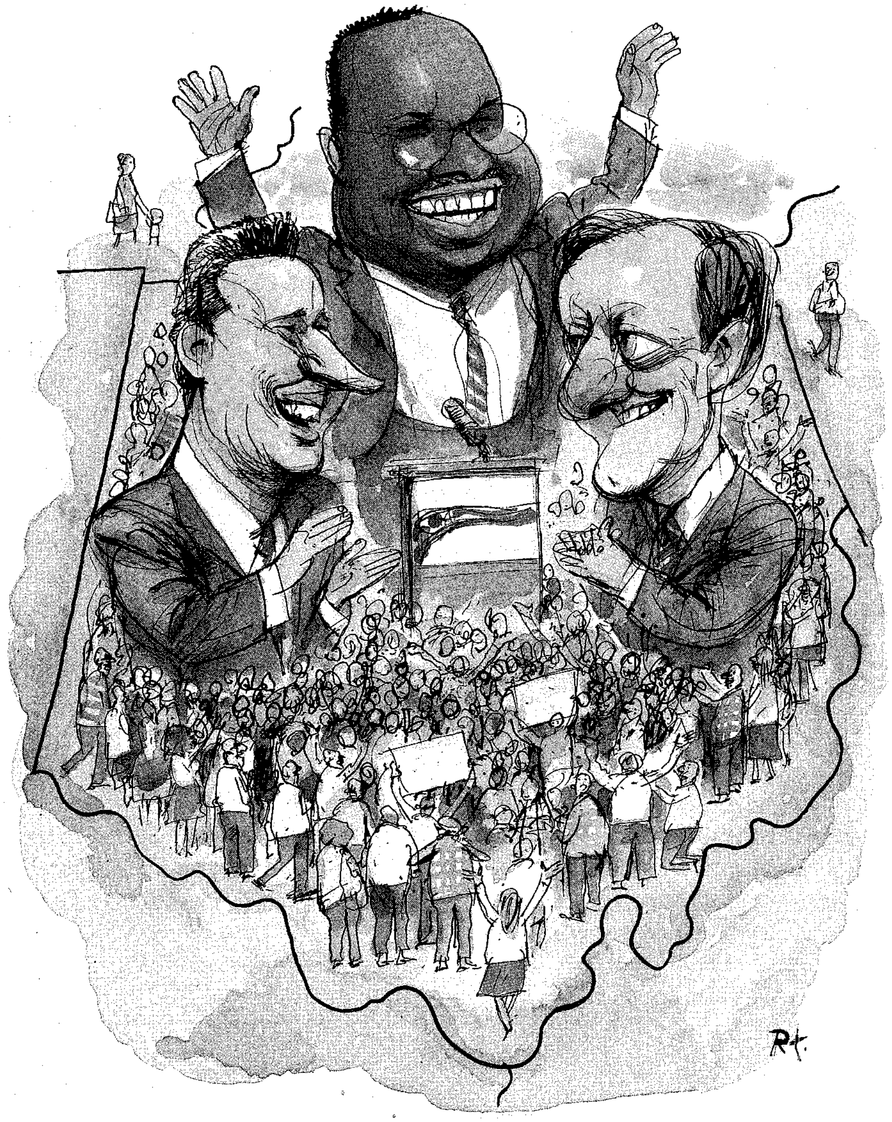
For the past two years, the religious right in Ohio has been on a victory march. In 2004, a coalition of conservative Christian organizations campaigned statewide for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, enlisting hundreds of pastors and collecting half a million signatures. The ballot initiative, known as Issue One, passed with sixty-three per cent of the vote, and many concluded that this effort to bring out "values voters" won the state for President Bush, and returned him to the White House. Parsley and another megachurch pastor, Russell Johnson, of the Fairfield Christian Church, campaigned hard for the initiative, as did Ken Blackwell, whose role in overseeing the election procedures caused a controversy of its own, and who was the only Republican leader in the state to join them. Subsequently, the two pastors formed organizations—Reformation Ohio and Johnson's Ohio Restoration Project—to get out the vote in 2006 and beyond. This year, there is nothing like Issue One on the ballot, but Blackwell, who carries the standard of the religious right, could become governor of Ohio.

Blackwell, a six-foot-four African-American former college football star, is a thoroughgoing conservative. He's a supply-sider who for years has advocated a flat tax and a constitutional limit on state spending. His views on abortion, gay marriage, school vouchers, and stem-cell research coincide with those of the religious right, and his position on concealed weapons with that of the N.R.A. He is also a media-savvy politician who has held statewide offices for the past twelve years, and he is well connected in George Bush's Washington. (His backers include Grover Norquist, Newt Gingrich, Governor Jeb Bush, and Senator John McCain.) With rimless glasses and a small mustache, Blackwell, at the age of fifty-eight, has an air of authority, and he is at ease with all kinds of audiences. At a breakfast for young executives in Columbus, in April, he began, as he often does, with a humorous story about his days as a football player, then told them what he had learned from a peanut seller he had worked for as a kid about the importance of "asset building" as a way out of poverty. (Blackwell is, in fact, a rich man, thanks to an investment he made in a broadcasting company in the nineteen-nineties.) Turning to the economic problems facing the state, he spoke about confiscatory taxes inhibiting capital flows and the need for a new budgeting process. No one challenged him—though some certainly held doubts. In debates, he is aggressive and given to cutting one-liners. He said of one opponent, "He has a difficult time holding a consistent position for six months without fainting from exhaustion."

But Blackwell can be a mesmerizing speaker. At an Ohio Restoration Project rally in a church outside Columbus, in March, he gave what amounted to a sermon about the obligation of Christians to "serve and engage." There are, he said, "social, cultural, and political forces that have tried to run God, faith, and religion out of the public square. The issue is, will you take a stand?" His big, deep voice filled the sanctuary, and, speaking without notes, he cited chapter and verse of the Bible. His delivery had members of the audience, which was almost entirely white, shouting out "Amen!" and interrupting his performance with bursts of applause. Before such audiences, he often quotes Martin Luther King, Jr., on the social responsibility of the church, but he is, as *National Review* has called him, a "post-racial, post-civil-rights campaigner." Many people like him in spite of his politics, or because they can't believe that he's really a doctrinaire right-winger. He still has friends from the early days of his political career, when he was far less conservative, and some of them remember his saying that he would be the first black President of the United States.

In the primary, in May, Blackwell beat Ohio's attorney general, Jim Petro, with fifty-six per cent of the vote. His victory has shaken the traditionally moderate Ohio Republican establishment, and Parsley's and Johnson's efforts to get out the vote have driven liberal members of the clergy to launch organizing efforts of their own. The election in November will determine whether the religious right will take command of the Ohio Republican Party. It will also make a difference, perhaps the crucial difference, in the next Presidential election.

"The road to the White House in '08 runs through Ohio in '06," Ohio political scientists are fond of saying. Since 1900, Ohio has voted for the winner in twenty-five of the twenty-seven Presidential elections. In 2004, both the Bush and the Kerry campaigns viewed Ohio as the key swing state, and they made the race the most expensive in Ohio's history, as well as one of the most effective in getting out the vote. In a state with a population of eleven and a half million, nearly three-quarters of a million new voters were added to the rolls, and seventy-two per cent of all registered Ohioans voted. Bush won by a hundred and eighteen thousand votes—two percentage points. However much Issue One contributed to the outcome, the President had a clear advantage in that the Republicans had built a strong state Party organization: they had held the governorship for fourteen years, and in 2004 they controlled all statewide offices and large majorities in the legislature. By contrast, the Ohio Democratic Party was a shambles. Since then, however, the state's economy has suffered—its unemployment rate is among the nation's highest—and a wave of scandals has broken over the Republican Party, bringing Governor Bob Taft's approval rating down to sixteen per cent. The Democrats have an opportunity that they have not had in years to win the governorship and rebuild their Party organization. Blackwell's opponent, Ted Strickland, is a five-term congressman, from a district



Rod Parsley, Ken Blackwell, and Russell Johnson support "values voters" issues.

RICHARD THOMPSON

that includes a swath of Appalachia, and a United Methodist minister, and he has consistently led in the polls. Still, Blackwell is a formidable campaigner, and he can claim to represent change.

"Ohio has for decades been a balanced state and one that has rewarded moderates," Mike Curtin, the associate publisher of the Columbus *Dispatch*, told me. "Look at Mike DeWine"—one of Ohio's two Republican senators. "He began as a prosecutor in a rural county. As he moved up, he progressed from conservatism to moderate conservatism. It's a path trod by many." Party discipline has been equally consistent. For more than a decade, the state Party chairman, Robert Bennett, with the assistance of other Party leaders and wealthy donors, has determined who would run for statewide offices. Bennett has headed off primary races for the top jobs, and he has enforced the "eleventh commandment," espoused by Ronald Reagan, that no Republican should speak ill of another. This year, however, Bennett failed to avert a gubernatorial primary, and Blackwell, the only successful right-wing politician in the state, repeatedly attacked Taft and other Party leaders. "Ken's a lone ranger," Bennett remarked a couple of years ago.

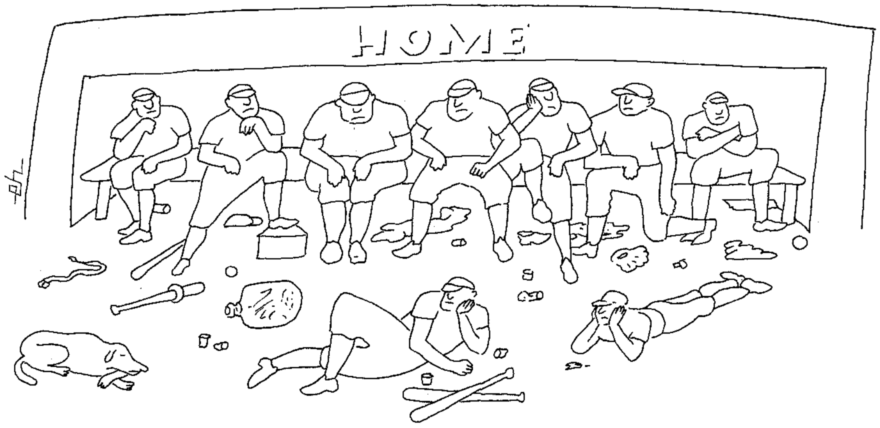
Blackwell first declared his candidacy for governor in 1998, four years after winning his first statewide office, as treasurer. Bennett, who thought that Taft had a better chance of succeeding George Voinovich as governor, persuaded Blackwell to run for secretary of state instead. It was not a job that he wanted—his interest lay in economic policy. But he won, and four years later Bennett pressed him to stay on for a second term. Once reëlected, he announced that he would run for governor when Taft stepped down, in 2006. His candidacy was not taken seriously until 2004, when the job that he didn't want put him in charge of voting procedures and made him the most important official in the state.

The Ohio election was marred by numerous irregularities, and whether Blackwell discharged his duties impartially and in accordance with the law remains a matter of dispute. Republicans defend his conduct, but Democrats and voting-rights advocates maintain that he deliberately suppressed the vote of Democrats and minorities. Dozens of lawsuits and official complaints were filed, and Representative John Conyers, Jr., of Michigan, and the Democratic staff of the House Judiciary Committee launched an investigation, fielding more than fifty thousand complaints from Ohioans. Blackwell's rulings have thus far stood up in court, but Democrats, who point out that Blackwell simultaneously served as the honorary co-chair of the Bush-Cheney campaign in Ohio, see a pattern of partisanship in his actions. A month before the registration deadline, Blackwell directed the County Boards of Elections to reject all voter-registration forms not printed on eighty-pound-stock paper. He rescinded the order three weeks later—even his own office didn't have paper that heavy—but in the meantime many voters who tried to register could not. Blackwell also ruled that provisional ballots (those given to voters not found on the rolls) had to be cast in the right precinct, as opposed to simply the right county. Thousands of provisional ballots were invalidated as a result, and Democrats argued that the order discriminated against low-income voters, who tend to move frequently, and therefore were more likely to show up at the wrong precinct. Blackwell called the contention prejudiced. "The assumption that minorities and low-income people should be treated as mentally challenged siblings is just insulting," he said.

On Election Day, voters in traditionally Democratic areas encountered a variety of obstacles, among them Republican challengers at the precincts, the improper purging of names from voter rolls, and, the most serious, a scarcity of voting machines. In suburban and rural areas, there were plenty of machines, but in urban precincts, where many African-Americans voted, and in other Democratic-leaning precincts, such as those around college campuses, people had to stand in line for as long as ten hours, and many of them just gave up.

After the election, more irregularities were discovered, among them spoiled ballots, voting-machine errors, provisional ballots mistakenly invalidated, and biased sample recounts. Blackwell dismissed most of the complaints as "partisan jibber-jabber" and asserted that none of the Election Day "glitches" were "of a conspiratorial nature, and none of them would have overturned or changed the election results." Blackwell has, however, reignited the controversy by interpreting a new election law with rules on voter registration so restrictive they could halt most registration drives in Ohio. A coalition of six civic groups is suing on the ground that the law will disenfranchise poor and minority voters, and Democrats are protesting that Blackwell should not be overseeing his own election.

Blackwell took advantage of the media attention that fall to launch his campaign for the governorship. He spoke out on issues from the sales tax to the Ohio Turnpike Commission, and he led the campaign for Issue One. Taft, Voinovich, and DeWine opposed the amendment, because it seemed to bar domestic-partnership benefits, but Blackwell travelled the state denouncing gay marriage. "The notion that a same-sex marriage can carry out the function of procreation or replenishing the human race defies not only human logic but



Thwarted in Their Attempts to Advance a Runner Against the Visitors, the Players to a Man Strangle All Ambition—That Driving Force We All So Foolishly Depend Upon barnyard logic," he said in a church outside Toledo. Often he toured in the company of Rod Parsley or Russell Johnson.

Ohio has long had chapters of national religious-right organizations, such as the Christian Coalition, as well as homegrown right-to-life and family-values groups. As in other states, these groups have mobilized voters and gained considerable influence in Republican county organizations. In recent years, the state legislature has passed a series of bills on the religious-right agenda, among them an experimental school-voucher program, a ban on late-term abortions, and a Defense of Marriage Act. Meanwhile, the state school board has been fighting over a proposed science standard that calls for "a critical analysis of evolution." But Parsley's and Johnson's leadership in the Issue One campaign brought religious-right activism to a new level.

The tabernacle, or sanctuary, in Parsley's World Harvest Church has upholstered pews arrayed in a semicircle around a stage lit for television. On the Sunday morning that I attended, almost all of the fifty-two hundred seats were filled, and the worshippers, many of them African-Americans, were swaying to the beat of a band heavy on brass and percussion. Huge video screens magnified images of the singers on the stage and a choir in purple robes standing on a balcony above it. Eventually, Parsley, a tall man with a graying brush cut, bounded onto the stage. He introduced his wife, Joni, spoke of voter registration, brought his congregants to their feet in waves, and had them shout a countdown to his call "It's showtime!" When he preached, he used his whole body and the full range of his husky baritone. Parsley is white, but, as black ministers say, he preaches black—he has the phrasing, the sighing intakes of breath, and the dramatic arc of the sermon.

A Pentecostal, Parsley preaches latter-day miracles, the healing of physical, spiritual, and financial ills, and the promise that those who give to the church will be rewarded in abundance. That Sunday, invoking Martin Luther, he called for a spiritual army to "track down our adversary, defeat him valiantly, then stand upon his carcass." Conservative Pentecostal pastors often use military metaphors, but Parsley's sermons are notable for their graphic detail. At the service that I attended, he spoke of the moment when "God broke into the world through the bloody flanks of a fourteen-year-old virgin." This puzzled me, until I understood that he was picturing Mary as a teen-ager who chose not to have an abortion.

A Bible-school dropout, Parsley began preaching in his parents' back yard, in the city of Pickerington, just east of Columbus. Today, World Harvest has two campuses, with a school, a Bible college, nine outreach programs, and a state-of-the-art television studio. His program, "Breakthrough," appears on fourteen hundred stations and cable affiliates. The church has a staff of three hundred and an annual budget of forty million dollars. Parsley frequently presents himself as a political centrist. However, in his book, "Silent No More," published last spring, his solution to poverty is for the government to "get out of the way," remove all constraints on the free-enterprise system, and let the churches assume their traditional role in helping the poor. He fulminates about homosexuality, and writes of Islam, "I do not believe that our country can truly fulfill its divine purpose until we understand America was founded, in part, with the intention of seeing this false religion destroyed." On the book's jacket is a blurb from Ken Blackwell, whom Parsley has known for years, though they were only slightly acquainted before 2004. "This book should inspire men and women of faith," Blackwell wrote, "and make 'values voters' a force that politicians can no longer ignore."

In a conference room after the service, Parsley told me that his call to activism had come when he attended the signing of the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act, at the White House, in 2003. Parsley had spoken on occasion about social issues in his television ministry, but, standing in the room with other Christian leaders and President Bush, he felt "the need to use the platform I was given." The following summer, he formed the Center for Moral Clarity, to educate citizens nationwide about legislation in statehouses and Congress. That fall, he travelled around Ohio, advocating the passage of Issue One. "I believe we had an impact," he said. "We have a multicultural church—and our urban ministries are largely black and Hispanic. The President won eleven per cent of the African-American vote nationally; he won sixteen per cent of it in Ohio." Parsley said that he hoped to open Reformation Ohio offices in Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland, and to hold two hundred citywide outreaches, adding, "We set a time frame of four years, because we didn't want to be perceived as following the election cycle, but we are going to ramp up before the primary."

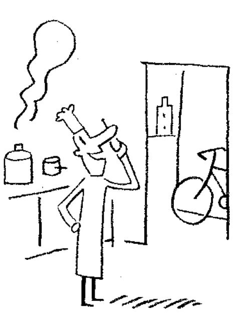
Russell Johnson's Fairfield Christian Church is in Lancaster, some fifteen miles south of World Harvest. It has a large sanctuary and a K-through-12 school for seven hundred students. Evangelical and nondenominational, the church attracts people from different doctrinal backgrounds, but its congregation of thirty-five hundred is almost entirely white. Johnson, who attended Kentucky Christian University, is a man of medium height, trimly built, with sandy hair and pink cheeks. He doesn't have Parsley's imposing presence, but he is shrewd, energetic, and highly articulate. On a tour of the church, he talked all the way. In a coffee shop above the sanctuary, an aquarium of exotic fish started him off on intelligent design. That led him to what he called "the secular school system," and principals who resist school-voucher programs—"They teach survival of the fittest, they just don't want to practice it." He also said that Roe v. Wade had led to the crisis in Social Security: "Abortion is also an economic issue. It has killed millions of American consumers."

Johnson has been involved in local politics for twenty years. Church members have been elected to county and municipal offices, and one, a volunteer pastor, serves as vice-chair of the Fairfield Republican Party. The church has invited local Republican politicians to speak, and, over the years, Johnson has got to know many social-issue activists and politicians around the state. But it was Issue One that propelled him into state politics and into an alliance with Parsley and Blackwell.

In 2004, there were similar amendments on the ballot in eleven states, and many Democrats suspected that Karl Rove had helped orchestrate them. In Ohio, the initiative came from Phil Burress, the president of Citizens for Community Values, a Cincinnati-based organization associated with James Dobson's Focus on the Family. The Ohio legislature passed its Defense of Marriage Act in January, 2004, but that May, when the Massachusetts Supreme Court's ruling on same-sex marriage took effect, Burress decided to try to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot. At a Johnson rally, Burress said that he had hired a polling firm and learned that the amendment would give the President three to five percentage points in the state. He asked Johnson, among others, to help circulate petitions. The coalition needed a spokesman, and Burress asked Blackwell, who accepted enthusiastically.

Johnson created the Ohio Restoration Project with the goal of enlisting two thousand pastors to commit themselves to registering three hundred new voters each by the end of 2006. He planned to raise a million dollars and to hold meetings across the state to find these "Patriot Pastors." On his church's Web site he wrote, "This is a battle between the forces of righteousness and the hordes of hell." To me, he said, "This is to elect values candidates."

By March, some of the pastors' goals had proved too ambitious. Johnson had to cancel a planned Ohio for Jesus rally for lack of funds, and Parsley has held only three Reformation Ohio events this year. The pastors had, in any case, no hope of registering hundreds of thousands of new voters: after the 2004 campaign, there weren't that many unregistered Ohioans left. They could, however, mobilize values voters for an off-year election, and effectively that's what they have done. Since the fall of 2004, Parsley, through his Center for Moral Clarity, has hosted breakfast meetings every three months, for a thousand to two thousand Ohio pastors, to discuss legislation, and at one of them former Senator Zell Miller, the maverick Georgia Democrat, endorsed Blackwell for governor. Johnson has held eight O.R.P. meetings and rallies across the state—seven of them featuring Blackwell—and he plans four more before November. He told me he had four hundred thousand people on his e-mail lists, organized by county and congressional district, and hundreds of prospective volunteers. He was preparing to distribute half a million copies of *Citizen USA*, the conservative Christian newspaper, with voter guides on the positions of candidates. When I spoke to him in late March, he told me that Senator DeWine, who is facing a difficult race this year, had just called him to say that he would be co-sponsoring the federal Marriage Protection Act, and to consult him about the immigration issue.

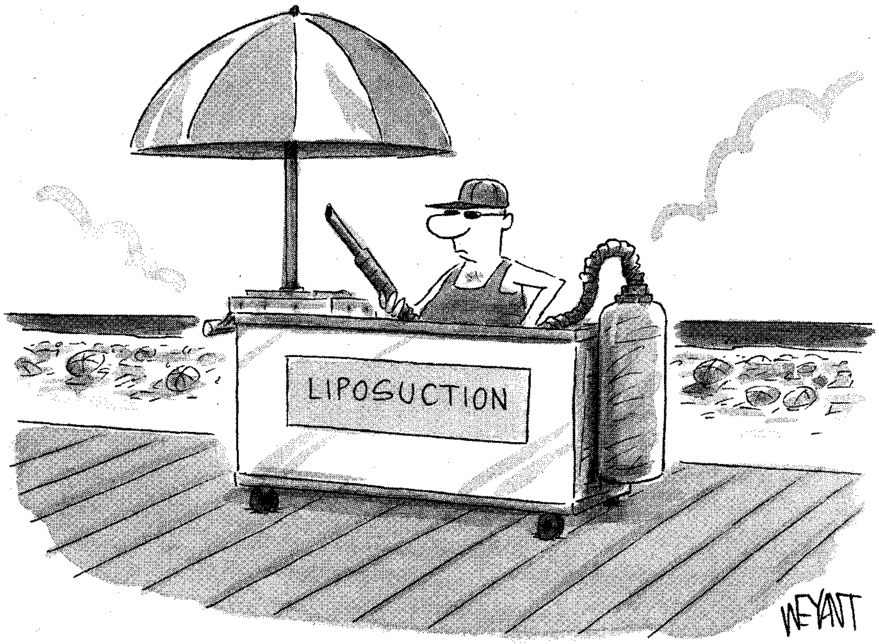


Many mainstream Ohio clergy members have long worried about the growing political influence of the Christian right, and Parsley's and Johnson's campaigns finally moved them to action. On January 15th, twenty-eight Protestant ministers and three rabbis in the Columbus area filed a complaint with the I.R.S. charging Parsley's and Johnson's churches and their tax-exempt affiliates with engaging in "a continuing pattern of political campaign activity" and promoting "one particular political party and one specific candidate." Parsley, Johnson, and Blackwell called the allegations false, and an attempt to deny freedom of speech to Americans who stood for Biblical morality. Eric Williams, a United Church of Christ minister and the group's spokesman, responded that he had no objection to pastors speaking out about religious values or political issues, but he did object to their endorsing a candidate. He told me, "What I'm afraid of is that they'll legislate their values, and make my brand of faith and the people in my congregation illegitimate." A month after the complaint was filed, the I.R.S. commissioner, Mark W. Everson, gave a speech in Cleveland in which he said that the enormous increase in campaign funding during the 2004 election cycle had led the I.R.S. to investigate complaints against eighty-two churches and charities, and that it had found merit in more than half of those cases. He concluded, "We can't afford to have our charitable and religious institutions undermined by politics." In April, the clergy members, who now numbered fifty-six, filed a second complaint, based on new information, and a third was lodged on Williams's behalf. Parsley and Johnson have not said whether the I.R.S. has contacted them, but Everson's speech might be interpreted as a warning to organizations like theirs.

Other clergy members who shared Williams's alarm decided to create their own activist organization. Tim Ahrens, the senior minister of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Columbus, told me that when he read about Parsley's rally at the Statehouse he thought, This is Tiananmen Square. It's time to stand in front of the tanks. The next day, he sent out an e-mail to colleagues, asking, "Is anyone alive out there?" Ahrens has since put together We Believe Ohio, a coalition of three hundred pastors, priests, rabbis, and imams in the Columbus and Cleveland areas. "We're not all liberals, theologically or otherwise," Ahrens said, "but we have a similar understanding of the relationship between faith and politics, and we can all stand up for justice for the poor." The members are putting on public events, doing advocacy work on issues such as housing and health care, and aiming to get eighty per cent of their congregations out to vote. "We're a bit late on this," Ahrens told me, "and we haven't much money, but just by saying 'We're people of faith, too,' we've emboldened others."

Ken Blackwell might once have sympathized with much of what We Believe Ohio stands for. The son of a meatpacker, he and his parents and younger brother lived in a housing project on the west side of Cincinnati until he was six. His parents believed in education, and in 1966 he went to Xavier University, a small Jesuit school in Cincinnati, on a football scholarship, becoming one of its few black students. In his sophomore year, he married his childhood sweetheart, and they moved into an apartment building that he helped manage. (Rosa Blackwell is now the superintendent of schools in Cincinnati.) The events of 1968, including a riot in an adjacent neighborhood, had a profound impact on many students at Xavier, and after Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated Blackwell persuaded the university to send him and a few other students to the funeral. That year, he became president of the nascent black-student association, grew an Afro, wore dashikis, and embraced the Black Power rhetoric of non-negotiable "demands." However, according to classmates and to John Henderson, the assistant dean of men and the first black administrator at Xavier, he played an entirely constructive role in persuading the university to recruit more black students and teachers, to treat its cafeteria workers better, and to invite civil-rights leaders to campus.

After graduating, Blackwell was called for a tryout with the Dallas Cowboys; when he didn't make the cut, he taught school for a few months, then returned to Xavier to work with Henderson, who had been chosen to direct a new office of university and urban affairs. When Henderson left for another university, Blackwell succeeded him in the job of recruiting and advising black students and of involving the university in the low-income communities surrounding it. In 1986, he became Xavier's vice-president for community relations.



While working for Xavier, Blackwell launched his political career. In 1975, he ran for the Cincinnati board of education, and, though unsuccessful, he gained the backing of the Charter Committee, a traditional, local reform organization, in a run for the City Council two years later. He won, and two years after that he became mayor. At the time, the post was largely ceremonial, with a one-year term, but the nine-member City Council had power, and Blackwell was reëlected to it five times. Colleagues and city-beat reporters found him friendly, hardworking, ambitious, and brilliant at attracting press coverage, but without much of a policy agenda. Initially a Democrat (as well as a Charterite), he worked for Jimmy Carter's reëlection, but after the Reagan landslide in 1980 he became a Republican.

In recent years, Blackwell has told reporters that he was never really a Democrat, and that he worked for Carter only because his wife was running as an alternate delegate to the 1980 Democratic National Convention. He has also said that he left the Charter Committee because it became "an advocate for bigger government and more taxes" and "a leading advocate for abortion rights." In fact, the Charterite positions did not change substantially. A more plausible explanation for his defection has to do with his friendship with Jack Kemp, whom he had met in 1977. A former Buffalo Bills star and then a prominent member of Congress, Kemp felt strongly that the Republican Party should reach out to black Americans. By December, 1980, Blackwell was quoting Kemp on economics. In his campaign biography, Blackwell says that he "was recruited to leadership in the Republican Party by President Ronald Reagan and many of his advisers, including Jack Kemp, Lyn Nofziger, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Ed Rollins." He actually remained on the Cincinnati City Council through Reagan's Presidency, but in 1989, when George H. W. Bush appointed Kemp Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Kemp hired Blackwell as a deputy. The following year, Blackwell had an opportunity to run for Congress, and Kemp urged him to take it.

Blackwell and his Democratic opponent in the race, Charlie Luken, had served on the Cincinnati City Council together for ten years. They had been friends, and occasionally allies, but the race was hard fought. Luken told me, "The Republicans didn't have an African-American in Congress back then, so they made a big effort. Jack Kemp came, Barbara Bush, President Bush came twice, and Ollie North was campaigning door to door." In the end, Blackwell lost by twenty-three hundred votes—in Luken's view, because he came out against the 1990 extension of the Civil Rights Act. The race nonetheless established Blackwell within the Republican Party. In 1991, Bush made him ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission; in 1994, Governor Voinovich appointed him state treasurer, to fill a vacancy, and in the Republican sweep of that year Blackwell was elected to the office.

At the time, Blackwell seemed to be a moderate Republican. However, as the national Republican Party moved to the right Blackwell did the same. In 2000, he served as the national chair of Steve Forbes's Presidential campaign, then moved to the Bush campaign, and, later that year, worked on the Florida recount. In December, 2003, he broke with the Ohio Republican leaders over an increase in the sales tax that Taft had instituted to balance the budget. In fund-raising letters, he charged that the Party was selling out Republican principles and positions "to the highest bidder." Robert Bennett, the state Party chairman, was furious. "He's willing to knife his own party in the back just to advance his own political career," he said. But Blackwell, it turned out, did exactly the right thing in putting distance between himself and the rest of the leadership.

Last April, the Toledo *Blade* published the first in a series of stories about Tom Noe, a rare-coin dealer who had contributed to the campaigns of almost every prominent Republican politician in the state and had raised a hundred thousand dollars for George Bush in 2004. The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation, the *Blade* disclosed, had invested fifty million dollars in Noe's coin funds, and two of the most valuable coins had disappeared. Federal and county investigators eventually learned that thirteen million dollars had gone missing from the funds, and that the bureau had lost more than two hundred million dollars in two other investments that were just as difficult to explain. They also found that Noe had laundered almost half the money that he had raised for Bush and had given several state officials small gifts, which they had not reported. Governor Taft was one of them. In August, after investigators had gone through his accounts, he admitted that he had broken state ethics laws by failing to report fifty-two gifts, including golf outings, hockey tickets, and meals. He was convicted of four misdemeanors and had to apologize to the citizens of Ohio.

Since the mid-nineteen-seventies, Ohio has had laws on its books designed to prevent pay-for-play arrangements between elected officials and companies that do business with the state. But these laws are easily circumvented. After the Noe scandal broke, journalists and other investigators turned up case after case in which officials had, quite legally, received hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign funds from employees or associates of state contractors, some of it channelled through Republican Party committees. The scale of the donations and the amount of business that their firms received—plus a few allegations of extortion—suggested that campaign contributions had become the price of doing business with the state. "Ohio is more corrupt than New Jersey," Herb Asher, a professor of political science at Ohio State University, told me. "Pay-for-play has become systemic, and no wonder. With the Republicans holding all the statewide offices and sizable majorities in both houses of the legislature, there's been no oversight except from the inept Democrats and the newspapers."

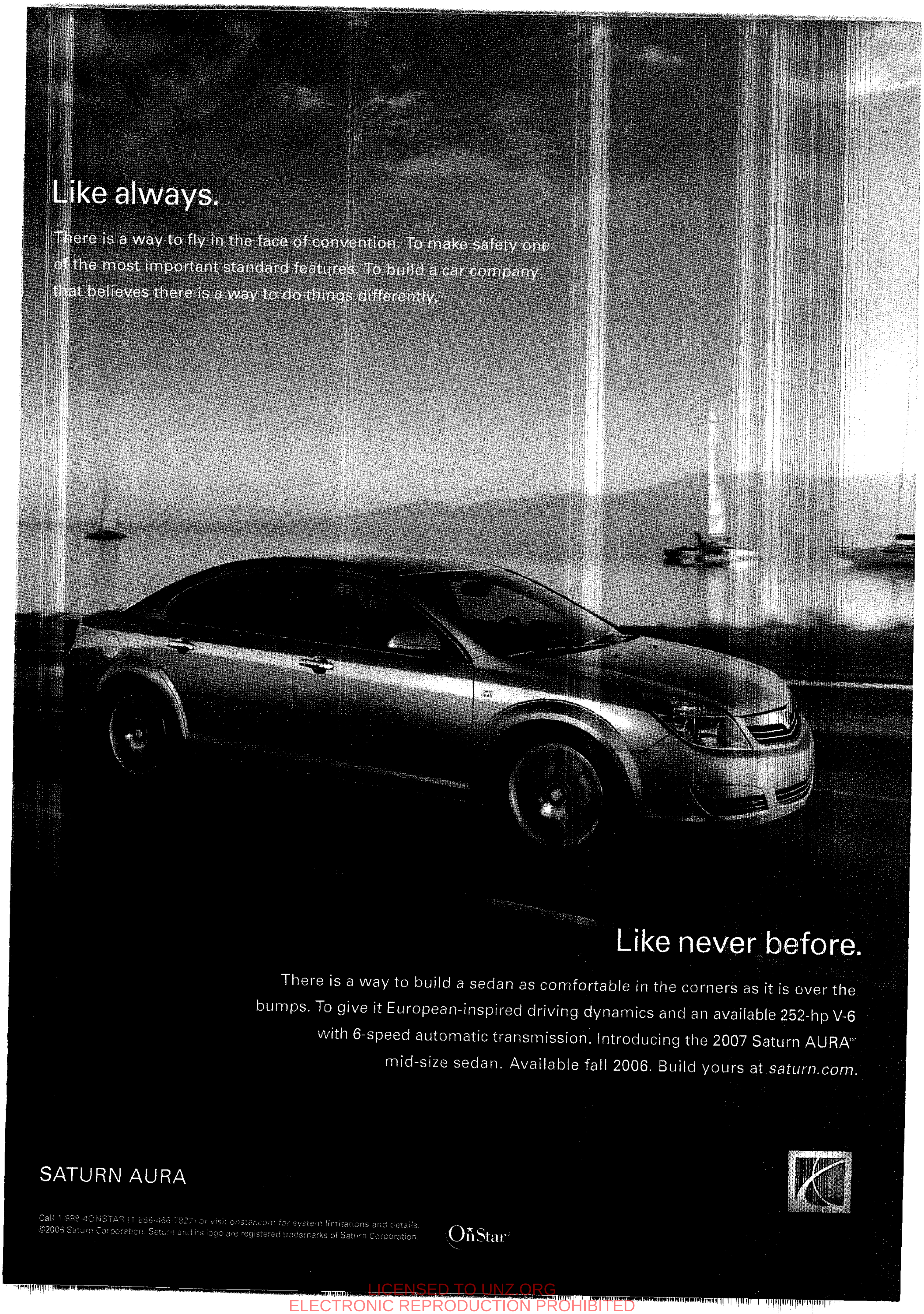
Whether or not pay-for-play was involved, the Ohio G.O.P. has raised millions of dollars each year from state contractors. This was certainly a consequence of one-party rule; it was also in some measure a cause of it—and, indirectly, part of the reason for the growing influence of the religious right. In the past four election cycles, the Republicans outspent the Democrats six to one, and in 2001 they redistricted and reapportioned the state with extraordinary precision. Ohio voters divide almost evenly in Presidential elections, yet the Republicans have a lock on twelve out of the eighteen congressional districts as well as on the state legislature. The result has been a rightward swing in the Party. "Most Republican candidates haven't had to worry about the Democrats," one Democratic analyst explained. "The only challenge they've had is from conservatives and religious conservatives in the primaries. So even moderates start moving to the right."

During the gubernatorial primary, Blackwell savaged Jim Petro, his establishment opponent, and made no concession to moderate Republicans. He came out for a law banning all abortions, without exception for the life of the woman. He also put considerable resources into getting onto the ballot a constitutional amendment to limit government spending. Spending cuts appealed to conservative primary voters, but the amendment was so restrictive that most of those who had actually read it thought that it would cripple the ability of state and local governments to budget for essential services. By late April, there was so much opposition among local officials that many predicted the amendment would destroy Blackwell's chances in the general election. Two weeks after the primary, the leaders of the Ohio legislature offered to pass a law limiting spending if Blackwell would get the amendment taken off the ballot. He immediately accepted the deal.

Blackwell refused to debate Petro, and in the last two weeks of the campaign he avoided newspaper reporters and spoke only to small-town conservative audiences. By that time, there was evidence that Parsley's and Johnson's efforts were succeeding. Blackwell, who raised more than six million dollars from January, 2005, through the end of the last reporting period, in June, had received more individual donations in amounts of two hundred dollars or less than all the other gubernatorial candidates in Ohio combined. In a Columbus *Dispatch* survey taken in April, forty-five per cent of prospective Republican voters identified themselves as born-again or evangelical Christians, and most of them supported Blackwell.

In the general election, Blackwell faces a strong opponent in Ted Strickland. As a minister, Strickland is comfortable talking about values and the role of religion in politics. He grew up in circumstances no better than Blackwell's: he is the eighth of nine children, his father was a steelworker, and his family lived in a chicken coop and a smokehouse for a period after their house burned down. He votes as a liberal on economic and social-welfare issues but favors restrictions on abortion and opposes gun control. According to an experienced Cincinnati reporter, he's the most underrated politician in the state: he lost a race in 1994, came back in 1996, and survived the redistricting of 2001. He isn't an orator, but, a tall man with an open face, he looks like the quintessential Midwesterner, and he speaks with a sincerity that may appeal to Ohio voters. In the past few months, he has introduced "Turnaround Ohio," a series of proposals on matters such as the development of alternative-energy sources, early-childhood care, job training, and higher education, all with the goal of bringing Ohio into the post-industrial economy. Never having run for statewide office, he is not as well known as Blackwell, but, for an Ohio Democrat, he has raised an unprecedented amount of money—slightly more than Blackwell in the same period—some of it from Republican businessmen.

By all measures, this should be a year for Democratic gains in Ohio. Bush is as unpopular there as he is nationally, and, according to a University of Akron poll, most prospective Ohio voters think that the state is on the wrong track. According to another poll, only a third of Ohio voters think that the Republicans should continue in office. Increasing numbers of liberal clergy are joining up to contest the right on social issues. But Blackwell is preparing to run another aggressive campaign and is hoping to draw African-Americans and conservative Catholics away from the Democratic Party. The night of the primary, he said, "Message to Brother Strickland: You can run but you can't hide. We're coming right atcha. We represent change, we represent the future, and there is no retreat in our bones." ♦



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

THE AMBIEN COOKBOOK

BY PAUL SIMMS

> The sleeping pill Ambien seems to unlock a primitive desire to eat in some patients, according to emerging medical case studies that describe how the drug's users sometimes sleepwalk into their kitchens, claw through their refrigerators like animals and consume calories ranging into the thousands.
>
> —*The Times.*

Sorpresa con Queso

Ingredients:
7 bags Cheetos-brand cheese snacks
17 to 19 glasses tap water
5 mg. Ambien

Place Cheetos bags in cupboard.

Take Ambien, fall asleep.

Wait 2-3 hours, then sleepwalk to kitchen, tear cupboard doors off hinges in search of Cheetos.

Find Cheetos, eat contents of all 7 bags.

Fall back asleep on kitchen floor.

When awakened by early-morning sunlight, get up and say, "What the—?"

Wipe orange Cheetos dust from fingers, face, and hair.

Drink 17 to 19 glasses of water from kitchen tap.

Return to bed.

Icebox Mélange

Ingredients:
Entire contents of refrigerator
1 Diet Snapple
5 mg. Ambien

Take Ambien, fall asleep.

Wait 2-3 hours, then sleepwalk to kitchen.

Devour everything in refrigerator (including all fancy mustards and jellies, iffy takeout leftovers, and plastic dial from thermostat).

Belch loud enough to wake wife or girlfriend. When she enters kitchen, bellow, "Can't you see I'm working here?"

Fall asleep on kitchen floor.

After 4-5 more hours, wake up on subway, fully dressed from the waist up, drinking a Diet Snapple.

Licorice Surprise

Ingredients:
1 black extension cord
1 wall outlet
5 mg. Ambien

Plug extension cord into wall socket near bed.

Plug other end of extension cord into clock radio on nightstand.

Take Ambien, fall asleep.

Sleep 3-4 hours.

Roll out of bed, wake up on floor.

See extension cord, think, What a big delicious licorice rope that is!

Chew on essentially flavorless cord until you get to the metallic center, where the surprise is.

Tummy Cake

Ingredients:
5 eggs
2 cups flour
1 cup Crisco
1/2 cup milk
5 mg. Ambien

Take Ambien, fall asleep.

Wake up in kitchen, mixing eggs, flour, Crisco, and milk in—for some reason—a mop bucket.

Let batter settle.

Go to living room, turn on TV, search channels for a show that explains the second part of how to make a cake.

Curse the designer of your TV remote for making a device that has the buttons on the wrong side—all facing the floor, where you can't see them.

Remember batter.

Retrieve bucket from kitchen, drink entire contents in 3-5 gulps.

Remember that the batter was supposed to be cooked.

Draw hot bath, immerse yourself in it, knead bloated stomach in effort to facilitate cooking process.

When mouth fills with now cooled bathwater, wake up and return to bed.

Lie back on pillow, watch cartoon bluebirds orbiting your head.

Grab one cartoon bluebird in midair and devour it raw, feathers and all.

Wake up at 7 A.M., with wife or girlfriend demanding to know what the F happened in the kitchen last night.

While trying to answer, burp up a single cartoon-bluebird feather. Cover mouth guiltily, even though she seems not to have noticed the feather.

When she slams the bedroom door and goes to work, pick cartoon-bluebird feather out of the air and swallow it.

Fall asleep for 36 more hours, interrupted only by periodic—and somehow epic-seeming—trips to the bathroom.

Nhi Ho Trang Phu

Ingredients:
1 package beef jerky
1 quart mango-flavored Gatorade
1 saucepan potable water
Salt to taste
5 mg. Ambien

Lay out beef jerky and Gatorade on nightstand, in anticipation of somnambulistic snack attack.

Take Ambien, fall asleep.

After 2-3 hours, awaken half-submerged in a rice paddy in the jungle lowlands just north of the Mekong Delta.

Back "in country." You know you're going to Heaven, 'cause you've spent your time in Hell. But here you are once again—back in the Shit.

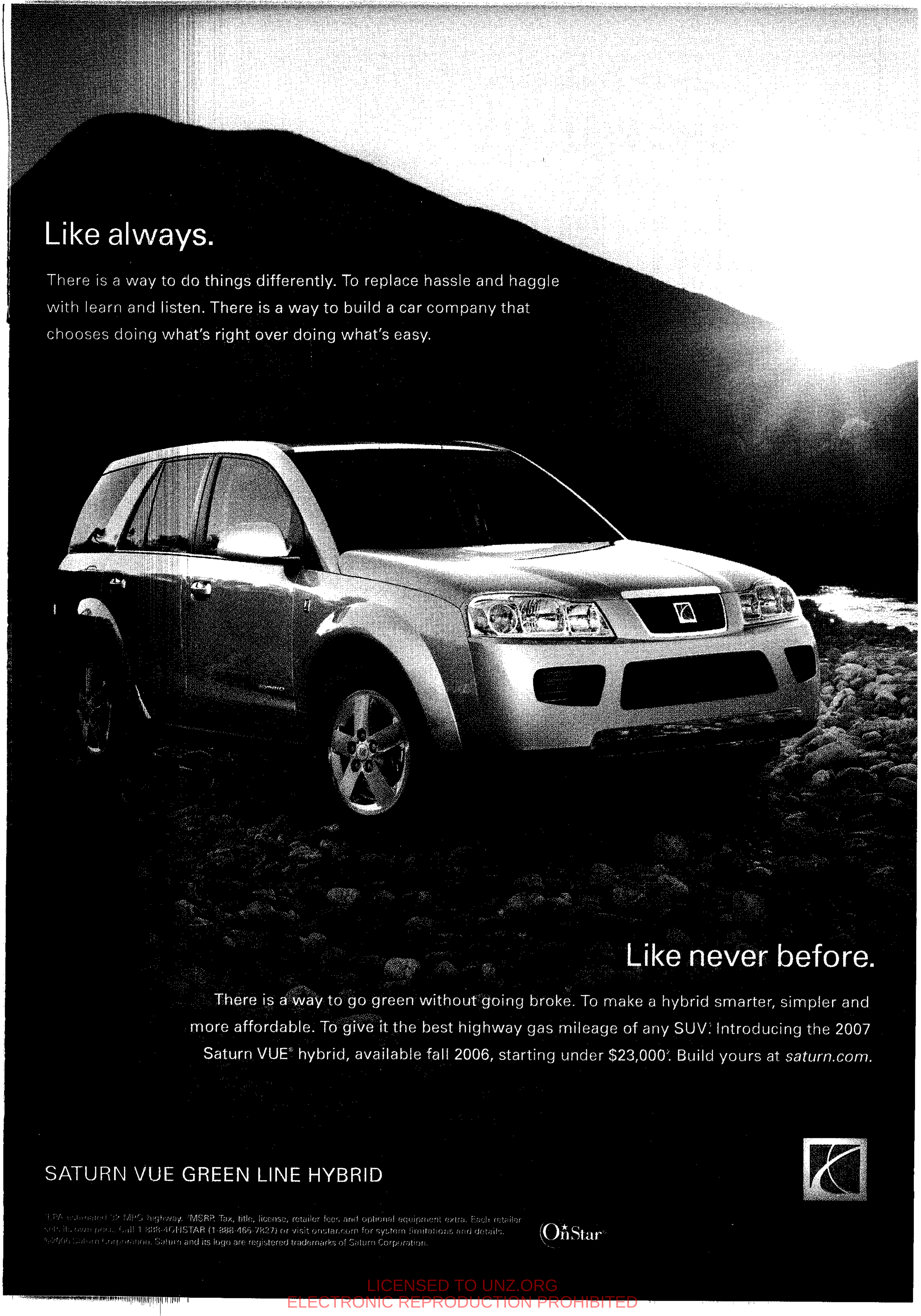
Stay still, stay quiet—as quiet as a mouse. You are asleep, but all of your senses are alert.

Spot V.C. sapper no more than one foot away, playing possum in spider hole beneath duvet-cover camouflage.

Silently stalk stationary V.C.; two can play this game, no?

When you gain tactical advantage, corner V.C. and remove ear(s).

Go to kitchen, put ear(s) into pot of water on stove, tie on souvenir lobster bib from Cape Cod trip last summer, sit down at kitchen table with knife in one hand and fork in the other, saying "Fee, fi, fo, fum" over and over—until water boils, or you wake up in police custody despite now earless wife or girlfriend's protestations of your innocence as delivered to police detective in emergency room, where she now is (whichever comes first). ♦



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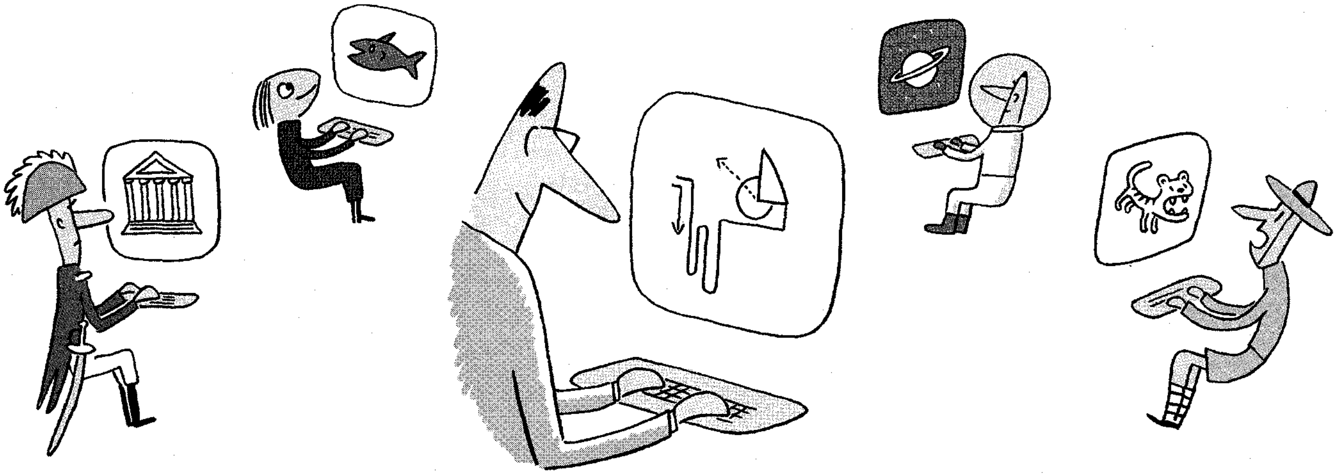
ANNALS OF INFORMATION

KNOW IT ALL

Can Wikipedia conquer expertise?

BY STACY SCHIFF

On March 1st, Wikipedia, the online interactive encyclopedia, hit the million-articles mark, with an entry on Jordanhill, a railway station in suburban Glasgow. Its author, Ewan MacDonald, posted a single sentence about the station at 11 P.M., local time; over the next twenty-four hours, the entry was edited more than four hundred times, by dozens of people. (Jordanhill happens to be the "1029th busiest station in the United Kingdom"; it "no longer has a staffed ticket counter.") The Encyclopædia Britannica, which for more than two centuries has been considered the gold standard for reference works, has only a hundred and twenty thousand entries in its most comprehensive edition. Apparently, no traditional encyclopedia has ever suspected that someone might wonder about Sudoku or about prostitution in China. Or, for that matter, about Capgras delusion (the unnerving sensation that an impostor is sitting in for a close relative), the Boston molasses disaster, the Rhinoceros Party of Canada, Bill Gates's house, the forty-five-minute Anglo-Zanzibar War, or Islam in Iceland. Wikipedia includes fine entries on Kafka and the War of the Spanish Succession, and also a complete guide to the ships of the U.S. Navy, a definition of Philadelphia cheesesteak, a masterly page on Scrabble, a list of historical cats (celebrity cats, a cat millionaire, the first feline to circumnavigate Australia), a survey of invented expletives in fiction ("bippie," "cakesniffer," "furgle"), instructions for curing hiccups, and an article that describes, with schematic diagrams, how to build a stove from a discarded soda can. The how-to entries represent territory that the encyclopedia has not claimed since the eighteenth century. You could cure a toothache or make snowshoes using the original Britannica, of 1768-71. (You could also imbibe a lot of prejudice and superstition. The entry on Woman was just six words: "The female of man. See HOMO.") If you look up "coffee preparation" on Wikipedia, you will find your way, via the entry on Espresso, to a piece on types of espresso machines, which you will want to consult before buying. There is also a page on the site dedicated to "Errors in the Encyclopædia Britannica that have been corrected in Wikipedia" (Stalin's birth date, the true inventor of the safety razor).

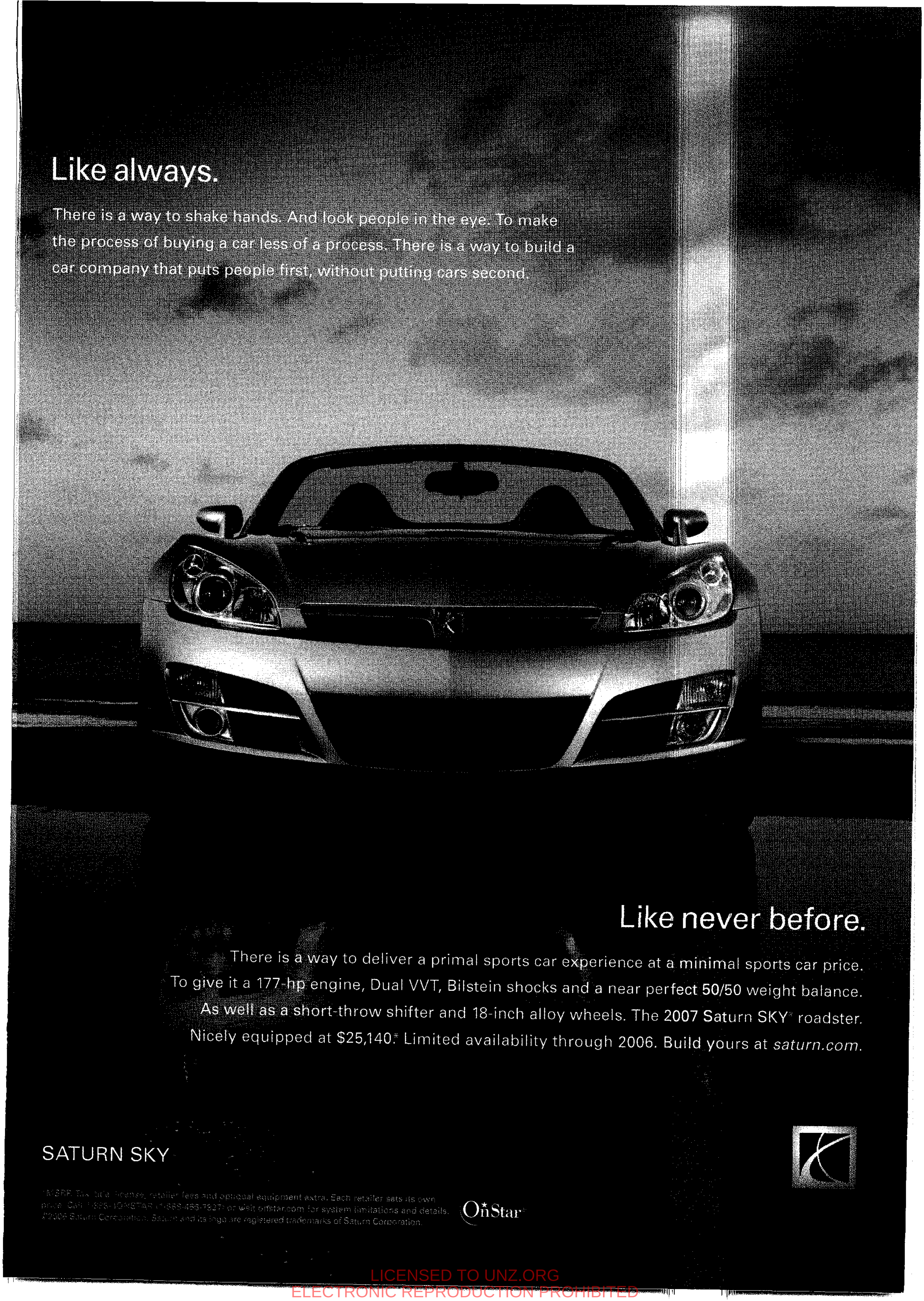


Anyone with Internet access can create a Wikipedia entry or edit one. The site has hundreds of thousands of contributors.

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

Because there are no physical limits on its size, Wikipedia can aspire to be all-inclusive. It is also perfectly configured to be current: there are detailed entries for each of the twelve finalists on this season's "American Idol," and the article on the "2006 Israel-Lebanon Conflict" has been edited more than four thousand times since it was created, on July 12th, six hours after Hezbollah militants ignited the hostilities by kidnapping two Israeli soldiers. Wikipedia, which was launched in 2001, is now the seventeenth-most-popular site on the Internet, generating more traffic daily than MSNBC.com and the online versions of the *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* combined. The number of visitors has been doubling every four months; the site receives as many as fourteen thousand hits per second. Wikipedia functions as a filter for vast amounts of information online, and it could be said that Google owes the site for tidying up the neighborhood. But the search engine is amply repaying its debt: because Wikipedia pages contain so many links to other entries on the site, and are so frequently updated, they enjoy an enviably high page rank.

The site has achieved this prominence largely without paid staff or revenue. It has five employees in addition to Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia's thirty-nine-year-old founder, and it carries no advertising. In 2003, Wikipedia became a nonprofit organization; it meets most of its budget, of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, with donations, the bulk of them contributions of



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twenty dollars or less. Wales says that he is on a mission to "distribute a free encyclopedia to every single person on the planet in their own language," and to an astonishing degree he is succeeding. Anyone with Internet access can create a Wikipedia entry or edit an existing one. The site currently exists in more than two hundred languages and has hundreds of thousands of contributors around the world. Wales is at the forefront of a revolution in knowledge gathering: he has marshalled an army of volunteers who believe that, working collaboratively, they can produce an encyclopedia that is as good as any written by experts, and with an unprecedented range.

Wikipedia is an online community devoted not to last night's party or to next season's iPod but to a higher good. It is also no more immune to human nature than any other utopian project. Pettiness, idiocy, and vulgarity are regular features of the site. Nothing about high-minded collaboration guarantees accuracy, and open editing invites abuse. Senators and congressmen have been caught tampering with their entries; the entire House of Representatives has been banned from Wikipedia several times. (It is not subtle to change Senator Robert Byrd's age from eighty-eight to a hundred and eighty. It is subtler to sanitize one's voting record in order to distance oneself from an unpopular President, or to delete broken campaign promises.) Curiously, though, mob rule has not led to chaos. Wikipedia, which began as an experiment in unfettered democracy, has sprouted policies and procedures. At the same time, the site embodies our newly casual relationship to truth. When confronted with evidence of errors or bias, Wikipedians invoke a favorite excuse: look how often the mainstream media, and the traditional encyclopedia, are wrong! As defenses go, this is the epistemological equivalent of "But Johnny jumped off the bridge first." Wikipedia, though, is only five years old. One day, it may grow up.

The encyclopedic impulse dates back more than two thousand years and has rarely balked at national borders. Among the first general reference works was Emperor's Mirror, commissioned in 220 A.D. by a Chinese emperor, for use by civil servants. The quest to catalogue all human knowledge accelerated in the eighteenth century. In the seventeen-seventies, the Germans, champions of thoroughness, began assembling a two-hundred-and-forty-two-volume masterwork. A few decades earlier, Johann Heinrich Zedler, a Leipzig bookseller, had alarmed local competitors when he solicited articles for his Universal-Lexicon. His rivals, fearing that the work would put them out of business by rendering all other books obsolete, tried unsuccessfully to sabotage the project.

It took a devious Frenchman, Pierre Bayle, to conceive of an encyclopedia composed solely of errors. After the idea failed to generate much enthusiasm among potential readers, he instead compiled a "Dictionnaire Historique et Critique," which consisted almost entirely of footnotes, many highlighting flaws of earlier scholarship. Bayle taught readers to doubt, a lesson in subversion that Diderot and d'Alembert, the authors of the Encyclopédie (1751-80), learned well. Their thirty-five-volume work preached rationalism at the expense of church and state. The more stolid Britannica was born of cross-channel rivalry and an Anglo-Saxon passion for utility.

Wales's first encyclopedia was the World Book, which his parents acquired after dinner one evening in 1969, from a door-to-door salesman. Wales—who resembles a young Billy Crystal with the neuroses neatly tucked in—recalls the enchantment of pasting in update stickers that cross-referenced older entries to the annual supplements. Wales's mother and grandmother ran a private school in Huntsville, Alabama, which he attended from the age of three. He graduated from Auburn University with a degree in finance and began a Ph.D. in the subject, enrolling first at the University of Alabama and later at Indiana University. In 1994, he decided to take a job trading options in Chicago rather than write his dissertation. Four years later, he moved to San Diego, where he used his savings to found an Internet portal. Its audience was mostly men; pornography—videos and blogs—accounted for about a tenth of its revenues. Meanwhile, Wales was cogitating. In his view, misinformation, propaganda, and ignorance are responsible for many of the world's ills. "I'm very much an Enlightenment kind of guy," Wales told me. The promise of the Internet is free knowledge for everyone, he recalls thinking. How do we make that happen?

As an undergraduate, he had read Friedrich Hayek's 1945 free-market manifesto, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," which argues that a person's knowledge is by definition partial, and that truth is established only when people pool their wisdom. Wales thought of the essay again in the nineteen-nineties, when he began reading about the open-source movement, a group of programmers who believed that software should be free and distributed in such a way that anyone could modify the code. He was particularly impressed by "The Cathedral and the Bazaar," an essay, later expanded into a book, by Eric Raymond, one of the movement's founders. "It opened my eyes to the possibility of mass collaboration," Wales said.

The first step was a misstep. In 2000, Wales hired Larry Sanger, a graduate student in philosophy he had met on a Listserv, to help him create an online general-interest encyclopedia called Nupedia. The idea was to solicit articles from scholars, subject the articles to a seven-step review process, and post them free online. Wales himself tried to compose the entry on Robert Merton and options-pricing theory; after he had written a few sentences, he remembered why he had dropped out of graduate school. "They were going to take my essay and send it to two finance professors in the field," he recalled. "I had been out of academia for several years. It was intimidating; it felt like homework."

After a year, Nupedia had only twenty-one articles, on such topics as atonality and Herodotus. In January, 2001, Sanger had dinner with a friend, who told him about the wiki, a simple software tool that allows for collaborative writing and editing. Sanger thought that a wiki might attract new contributors to Nupedia. (Wales says that using a wiki was his idea.) Wales agreed to try it, more or less as a lark. Under the wiki model that Sanger and Wales adopted, each entry included a history page, which preserves a record of all editing changes. They added a talk page, to allow for discussion of the editorial process—an idea Bayle would have appreciated. Sanger coined the term Wikipedia, and the site went live on January 15, 2001. Two days later, he sent an e-mail to the Nupedia mailing list—about two thousand people. "Wikipedia is up!" he wrote. "Humor me. Go there and add a little article. It will take all of five or ten minutes."

Wales braced himself for "complete rubbish." He figured that if he and Sanger were lucky the wiki would generate a few rough drafts for Nupedia. Within a month, Wikipedia had six hundred articles. After a year, there were twenty thousand.

Wales is fond of citing a 1962 proclamation by Charles Van Doren, who later became an editor at Britannica. Van Doren believed that the traditional encyclopedia was defunct. It had grown by accretion rather than by design; it had sacrificed artful synthesis to plodding convention; it looked backward. "Because the world is radically new, the ideal encyclopedia should be radical, too," Van Doren wrote. "It should stop being safe—in politics, in philosophy, in science."

In its seminal Western incarnation, the encyclopedia had been a dangerous book. The Encyclopédie muscled aside religious institutions and orthodoxies to install human reason at the center of the universe—and, for that muscling, briefly earned the book's publisher a place in the Bastille. As the historian Robert Darnton pointed out, the entry in the Encyclopédie on cannibalism ends with the cross-reference "See Eucharist." What Wales seems to have in mind, however, is less Van Doren's call to arms than that of an earlier rabble-rouser. In the nineteen-thirties, H. G. Wells lamented that, while the world was becoming smaller and moving at increasing speed, the way information was distributed remained old-fashioned and ineffective. He prescribed a "world brain," a collaborative, decentralized repository of knowledge that would be subject to continual revision. More radically—with "alma-matricidal impiety," as he put it—Wells indicted academia; the university was itself medieval. "We want a Henry Ford today to modernize the distribution of knowledge, make good knowledge cheap and easy in this still very ignorant, ill-educated, ill-served English-speaking world of ours," he wrote. Had the Internet existed in his lifetime, Wells might have beaten Wales to the punch.

Wales's most radical contribution may be not to have made information free but—in his own alma-matricidal way—to have invented a system that does not favor the Ph.D. over the well-read fifteen-year-old. "To me, the key thing is getting it right," Wales has said of Wikipedia's contributors. "I don't care if they're a high-school kid or a Harvard professor." At the beginning, there were no formal rules, though Sanger eventually posted a set of guidelines on the site. The first was "Ignore all the rules." Two of the others have become central tenets: articles must reflect a neutral point of view (N.P.O.V., in Wikipedia lingo), and their content must be both verifiable and previously published. Among other things, the prohibition against original research heads off a great deal of material about people's pets.

Insofar as Wikipedia has a physical existence, it is in St. Petersburg, Florida, in an executive suite that serves as the headquarters of the Wikimedia Foundation, the parent organization of Wikipedia and its lesser-known sister projects, among them Wikisource (a library of free texts), Wikinews (a current-events site) and Wikiquote (bye-bye Bartlett's). Wales, who is married and has a five-year-old daughter, says that St. Petersburg's attractive housing prices lured him from California. When I visited the offices in March, the walls were bare, the furniture battered. With the addition of a dead plant, the suite could pass for a graduate-student lounge.

The real work at Wikipedia takes place not in Florida but on thousands of computer screens across the world. Perhaps Wikipedia's greatest achievement—one that Wales did not fully anticipate—was the creation of a community. Wikipedians are officially anonymous, contributing to unsigned entries under screen names. They are also predominantly male—about eighty per cent, Wales says—and compulsively social, conversing with each other not only on the talk pages attached to each entry but on Wikipedia-dedicated I.R.C. channels and on user pages, which regular contributors often create and which serve as a sort of personalized office cooler. On the page of a twenty-year-old Wikipedian named Arocoun, who lists "philosophizing" among his favorite activities, messages from other users range from the reflective ("I'd argue against your claim

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that humans should aim to be independent/self-reliant in all aspects of their lives... I don't think true independence is a realistic ideal given all the inherent intertwinings of any society") to the geekily flirtatious ("I'm a neurotic painter from Ohio, and I guess if you consider your views radical, then I'm a radical, too. So ... we should be friends").

Wikipedians have evolved a distinctive vocabulary, of which "revert," meaning "reinstate"—as in "I reverted the edit, but the user has simply re-reverted it"—may be the most commonly used word. Other terms include WikiGnome (a user who keeps a low profile, fixing typos, poor grammar, and broken links) and its antithesis, WikiTroll (a user who persistently violates the site's guidelines or otherwise engages in disruptive behavior). There are Aspergian Wikipedians (seventy-two), bipolar Wikipedians, vegetarian Wikipedians, antivegetarian Wikipedians, existential Wikipedians, pro-Luxembourg Wikipedians, and Wikipedians who don't like to be categorized. According to a page on the site, an avid interest in Wikipedia has been known to afflict "computer programmers, academics, graduate students, gameshow contestants, news junkies, the unemployed, the soon-to-be unemployed and, in general, people with multiple interests and good memories." You may travel in more exalted circles, but this covers pretty much everyone I know.

OUR FLOWERS

After the storm white and black clouds hung
in the sky like dogs and cats drinking
out of the same blue bowl.
It has been so long since we danced,
not counting the slow shuffle at the Zoo Ball,
you in the black tie the valet knotted in the parking lot
after the Internet instructions failed.
"Failure" is such a beautiful word for something
lousy, the lure of it not at all like the rain,
the drenching rain after the long hot drought that ended today.
When you said you loved substations, I thought of long
sandwiches until across the street I saw
the electricity-making equipment you'd already started
naming the parts of. I wanted to name the clouds—
dogwood, tiger lily, lilac, the lost flowers
of my girlhood, and of course the thousands of blossoms of phlox
in the rock garden my impossibly young grandmother sat in
for the photograph with three stone ducks.
What if we went back,
as children, to where no one asks how long the blooms
will bloom, to sleep with our grandmothers
in the feather bed carried from the old country,
all of us dreaming our own painful music, the songs
that will wake us in time for the next storm,
and even if it brings down limbs and live wires
dancing in wild arcs, we'll watch
the wind rouse the trees while the petals
of where we belong blow down
to rain on the unkissably muddy ground.

—Barbara Ras

Wikipedia may be the world's most ambitious vanity press. There are two hundred thousand registered users on the English-language site, of whom about thirty-three hundred—fewer than two per cent—are responsible for seventy per cent of the work. The site allows you to compare contributors by the number of edits they have made, by the number of articles that have been judged by community vote to be outstanding (these "featured" articles often appear on the site's home page), and by hourly activity, in graph form. A seventeen-year-old P. G. Wodehouse fan who specializes in British peerages leads the featured-article pack, with fifty-eight entries. A twenty-four-year-old University of Toronto graduate is the site's premier contributor. Since composing his first piece, on the Panama Canal, in 2001, he has written or edited more than seventy-two thousand articles. "Wikipediholism" and "editcountitis" are well defined on the site; both link to an article on obsessive-compulsive disorder. (There is a Britannica entry for O.C.D., but no version of it has included Felix Unger's name in the third sentence, a comprehensive survey of "OCD in literature and film," or a list of celebrity O.C.D. sufferers, which unites, surely for the first time in history, Florence Nightingale with Joey Ramone.)

One regular on the site is a user known as Essjay, who holds a Ph.D. in theology and a degree in canon law and has written or contributed to sixteen thousand entries. A tenured professor of religion at a private university, Essjay made his first edit in February, 2005. Initially, he contributed to articles in his field—on the penitential rite, transubstantiation, the papal tiara. Soon he was spending fourteen hours a day on the site, though he was careful to keep his online life a secret from his colleagues and friends. (To his knowledge, he has never met another Wikipedian, and he will not be attending Wikimania, the second international gathering of the encyclopedia's contributors, which will take place in early August in Boston.)

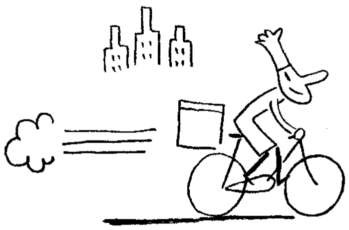
Gradually, Essjay found himself devoting less time to editing and more to correcting errors and removing obscenities from the site. In May, he twice removed a sentence from the entry on Justin Timberlake asserting that the pop star had lost his home in 2002 for failing to pay federal taxes—a statement that Essjay knew to be false. The incident ended there. Others involve ideological disagreements and escalate into intense edit wars. A number of the disputes on the English-language Wikipedia relate to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to religious issues. Almost as acrimonious are the battles waged over the entries on Macedonia, Danzig, the Armenian genocide, and Henry Ford. Ethnic feuds die hard: Was Copernicus Polish, German, or Prussian? (A nonbinding poll was conducted earlier this year to determine whether the question merited mention in the article's lead.) Some debates may never be resolved: Was the 1812 Battle of Borodino a victory for the Russians or for the French? What is the date of Ann Coulter's birth? Is apple pie all-American? (The answer, at least for now, is no: "Apple trees didn't even grow in America until the Europeans brought them over," one user railed. He was seconded by another, who added, "Apple pie is very popular in the Netherlands too. Americans did not invent or introduce it to the Netherlands. You already plagiarized Santa Claus from our Saint Nicholas. Stop it!") Who could have guessed that "cheese" would figure among the site's most contested entries? (The controversy entailed whether in Asia there is a cultural prohibition against eating it.) For the past nine months, Baltimore's climate has been a subject of bitter debate. What *is* the average temperature in January?

At first, Wales handled the fistfights himself, but he was reluctant to ban anyone from the site. As the number of users increased, so did the editing wars and the incidence of vandalism. In October, 2001, Wales appointed a small cadre of administrators, called admins, to police the site for abuse. Admins can delete articles or protect them from further changes, block users from editing, and revert text more efficiently than can ordinary users. (There are now nearly a thousand admins on the site.) In 2004, Wales formalized the 3R rule—initially it had been merely a guideline—according to which any user who reverts the same text more than three times in a twenty-four-hour period is blocked from editing for a day. The policy grew out of a series of particularly vitriolic battles, including one over the U.S. economy—it was experiencing either high growth and low unemployment or low growth and high unemployment.

Wales also appointed an arbitration committee to rule on disputes. Before a case reaches the arbitration committee, it often passes through a mediation committee. Essjay is serving a second term as chair of the mediation committee. He is also an admin, a bureaucrat, and a checkuser, which means that he is one of fourteen Wikipedians authorized to trace I.P. addresses in cases of suspected abuse. He often takes his laptop to class, so that he can be available to Wikipedians while giving a quiz, and he keeps an eye on twenty I.R.C. chat channels, where users often trade gossip about abuses they have witnessed.

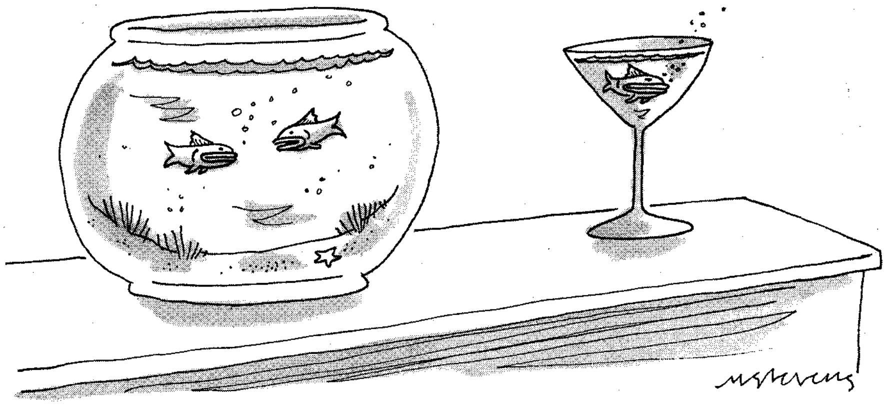
Five robots troll the site for obvious vandalism, searching for obscenities and evidence of mass deletions, reverting text as they go. More egregious violations require human intervention. Essjay recently caught a user who, under one screen name, was replacing sentences with nonsense and deleting whole entries and, under another, correcting the abuses—all in order to boost his edit count. He was banned permanently from the site. Some users who have been caught tampering threaten revenge against the admins who apprehend them. Essjay says that he routinely receives death threats. "There are people who take Wikipedia way too seriously," he told me. (Wikipedians have acknowledged Essjay's labors by awarding him numerous barnstars—five-pointed stars, which the community has adopted as a symbol of praise—including several Random Acts of Kindness Barnstars and the Tireless Contributor Barnstar.)

Wikipedia has become a regulatory thicket, complete with an elaborate hierarchy of users and policies about policies. Martin Wattenberg and Fernanda B. Viégas, two researchers at I.B.M. who have studied the site using computerized visual models called "history flows," found that the talk pages and "meta pages"—those dealing with coördination and administration—have experienced the greatest growth. Whereas articles once made up about eighty-five per cent of the site's content, as of last October they represented seventy per cent. As Wattenberg put it, "People are talking about governance, not working on content." Wales is ambivalent about the rules and procedures but believes that they are necessary. "Things work well when a group of people know each other, and things break down when it's a bunch of random people interacting," he told me.



For all its protocol, Wikipedia's bureaucracy doesn't necessarily favor truth. In March, 2005, William Connolley, a climate modeller at the British Antarctic Survey, in Cambridge, was briefly a victim of an edit war over the entry on global warming, to which he had contributed. After a particularly nasty confrontation with a skeptic, who had repeatedly watered down language pertaining to the greenhouse effect, the case went into arbitration. "User William M. Connolley strongly pushes his POV with systematic removal of any POV which does not match his own," his accuser charged in a written deposition. "His views on climate science are singular and narrow." A decision from the arbitration committee was three months in coming, after which Connolley was placed on a humiliating one-revert-a-day parole. The punishment was later revoked, and Connolley is now an admin, with two thousand pages on his watchlist—a feature that enables users to compile a list of entries and to be notified when changes are made to them. He says that Wikipedia's entry on global warming may be the best page on the subject anywhere on the Web. Nevertheless, Wales admits that in this case the system failed. It can still seem as though the user who spends the most time on the site—or who yells the loudest—wins.

Connolley believes that Wikipedia "gives no privilege to those who know what they're talking about," a view



"Sad, isn't it? And he won't admit he has a problem."

• •

that is echoed by many academics and former contributors, including Larry Sanger, who argues that too many Wikipedians are fundamentally suspicious of experts and unjustly confident of their own opinions. He left Wikipedia in March, 2002, after Wales ran out of money to support the site during the dot-com bust. Sanger concluded that he had become a symbol of authority in an anti-authoritarian community. "Wikipedia has gone from a nearly perfect anarchy to an anarchy with gang rule," he told me. (Sanger is now the director of collaborative projects at the online foundation Digital Universe, where he is helping to develop a Web-based encyclopedia, a hybrid between a wiki and a traditional reference work. He promises that it will have "the lowest error rate in history.") Even Eric Raymond, the open-source pioneer whose work inspired Wales, argues that "'disaster' is not too strong a word" for Wikipedia. In his view, the site is "infested with moonbats." (Think hobgoblins of little minds, varsity division.) He has found his corrections to entries on science fiction dismantled by users who evidently felt that he was trespassing on their terrain. "The more you look at what some of the Wikipedia contributors have done, the better Britannica looks," Raymond said. He believes that the open-source model is simply inapplicable to an encyclopedia. For software, there is an objective standard: either it works or it doesn't. There is no such test for truth.

Nor has increasing surveillance of the site by admins deterred vandals, a majority of whom seem to be inserting obscenities and absurdities into Wikipedia when they should be doing their homework. Many are committing their pranks in the classroom: the abuse tends to ebb on a Friday afternoon and resume early on a Monday. Entire schools and universities have found their I.P. addresses blocked as a result. The entry on George W. Bush has been vandalized so frequently—sometimes more than twice a minute—that it is often closed to editing for days. At any given time, a couple of hundred entries are semi-protected, which means that a user must register his I.P. address and wait several days before making changes. This group recently included not only the entries on God, Galileo, and Al Gore but also those on poodles, oranges, and Frédéric Chopin. Even Wales has been caught airbrushing his Wikipedia entry—eighteen times in the past year. He is particularly sensitive about references to the porn traffic on his Web portal. "Adult content" or "glamour photography" are the terms that he prefers, though, as one user pointed out on the site, they are perhaps not the most precise way to describe lesbian strip-poker threesomes. (In January, Wales agreed to a compromise: "erotic photography.") He is repentant about his meddling. "People shouldn't do it, including me," he said. "It's in poor taste."

Wales recently established an "oversight" function, by which some admins (Essjay among them) can purge text from the system, so that even the history page bears no record of its ever having been there. Wales says that this measure is rarely used, and only in order to remove slanderous or private information, such as a telephone number. "It's a perfectly reasonable power in any other situation, but completely antithetical to this project," said Jason Scott, a longtime contributor to Wikipedia who has published several essays critical of the site.

Is Wikipedia accurate? Last year, *Nature* published a survey comparing forty-two entries on scientific topics on Wikipedia with their counterparts in Encyclopædia Britannica. According to the survey, Wikipedia had four errors for every three of Britannica's, a result that, oddly, was hailed as a triumph for the upstart. Such exercises in nitpicking are relatively meaningless, as no reference work is infallible. Britannica issued a public statement refuting the survey's findings, and took out a half-page advertisement in the *Times*, which said, in part, "Britannica has never claimed to be error-free. We have a reputation not for unattainable perfection but for strong scholarship, sound judgment, and disciplined editorial review." Later, Jorge Cauz, Britannica's president, told me in an e-mail that if Wikipedia continued without some kind of editorial oversight it would "decline into a hulking mediocre mass of uneven, unreliable, and, many times, unreadable articles." Wales has said that he would consider Britannica a competitor, "except that I think they will be crushed out of existence within five years."

Larry Sanger proposes a fine distinction between knowledge that is useful and knowledge that is reliable, and there is no question that Wikipedia beats every other source when it comes to breadth, efficiency, and accessibility. Yet the site's virtues are also liabilities. Cauz scoffed at the notion of "good enough knowledge." "I hate that," he said, pointing out that there is no way to know which facts in an entry to trust. Or, as Robert McHenry, a veteran editor at Britannica, put it, "We can get the wrong answer to a question quicker than our fathers and mothers could find a pencil."

Part of the problem is provenance. The bulk of Wikipedia's content originates not in the stacks but on the Web, which offers up everything from breaking news, spin, and gossip to proof that the moon landings never took place. Glaring errors jostle quiet omissions. Wales, in his public speeches, cites the Google test: "If it isn't on Google, it doesn't exist." This position poses another difficulty: on Wikipedia, the present takes precedent over the past. The (generally good) entry on St. Augustine is shorter than the one on Britney Spears. The article on Nietzsche has been modified incessantly, yielding five archived talk pages. But the debate is largely over Nietzsche's politics; taken as a whole, the entry is inferior to the essay in the current Britannica, a model of its form. (From Wikipedia: "Nietzsche also owned a copy of Philipp Mainländer's 'Die Philosophie der Erlösung,' a work which, like Schopenhauer's philosophy, expressed pessimism.")

Wikipedia remains a lumpy work in progress. The entries can read as though they had been written by a seventh grader: clarity and concision are lacking; the facts may be sturdy, but the connective tissue is either anemic or absent; and citation is hit or miss. Wattenberg and Viégas, of I.B.M., note that the vast majority of Wikipedia edits consist of deletions and additions rather than of attempts to reorder paragraphs or to shape an entry as a whole, and they believe that Wikipedia's twenty-five-line editing window deserves some of the blame. It is difficult to craft an article in its entirety when reading it piecemeal, and, given Wikipedians' obsession with racking up edits, simple fixes often take priority over more complex edits. Wattenberg and Viégas have also identified a "first-mover advantage": the initial contributor to an article often sets the tone, and that person is rarely a Macaulay or a Johnson. The over-all effect is jittery, the textual equivalent of a film shot with a hand-held camera.

What can be said for an encyclopedia that is sometimes right, sometimes wrong, and sometimes illiterate? When I showed the Harvard philosopher Hilary Putnam his entry, he was surprised to find it as good as the one in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. He was flabbergasted when he learned how Wikipedia worked. "Obviously, this was the work of experts," he said. In the nineteen-sixties, William F. Buckley, Jr., said that he would sooner "live in a society governed by the first two thousand names in the Boston telephone directory than in a society governed by the two thousand faculty members of Harvard University." On Wikipedia, he might finally have his wish. How was his page? Essentially on target, he said. All the same, Buckley added, he would prefer that those anonymous two thousand souls govern, and leave the encyclopedia writing to the experts.

Over breakfast in early May, I asked Cauz for an analogy with which to compare Britannica and Wikipedia. "Wikipedia is to Britannica as 'American Idol' is to the Juilliard School," he e-mailed me the next day. A few days later, Wales also chose a musical metaphor. "Wikipedia is to Britannica as rock and roll is to easy listening," he suggested. "It may not be as smooth, but it scares the parents and is a lot smarter in the end." He is right to emphasize the fright factor over accuracy. As was the Encyclopédie, Wikipedia is a combination of manifesto and reference work. Peer review, the mainstream media, and government agencies have landed us in a ditch. Not only are we impatient with the authorities but we are in a mood to talk back. Wikipedia offers endless opportunities for self-expression. It is the love child of reading groups and chat rooms, a second home for anyone who has written an Amazon review. This is not the first time that encyclopedia-makers have snatched control from an élite, or cast a harsh light on certitude. Jimmy Wales may or may not be the new Henry Ford, yet he has sent us tooling down the interstate, with but a squint back at the railroad. We're on the open road now, without conductors and timetables. We're free to chart our own course, also free to get gloriously, recklessly lost. Your truth or mine? ♦

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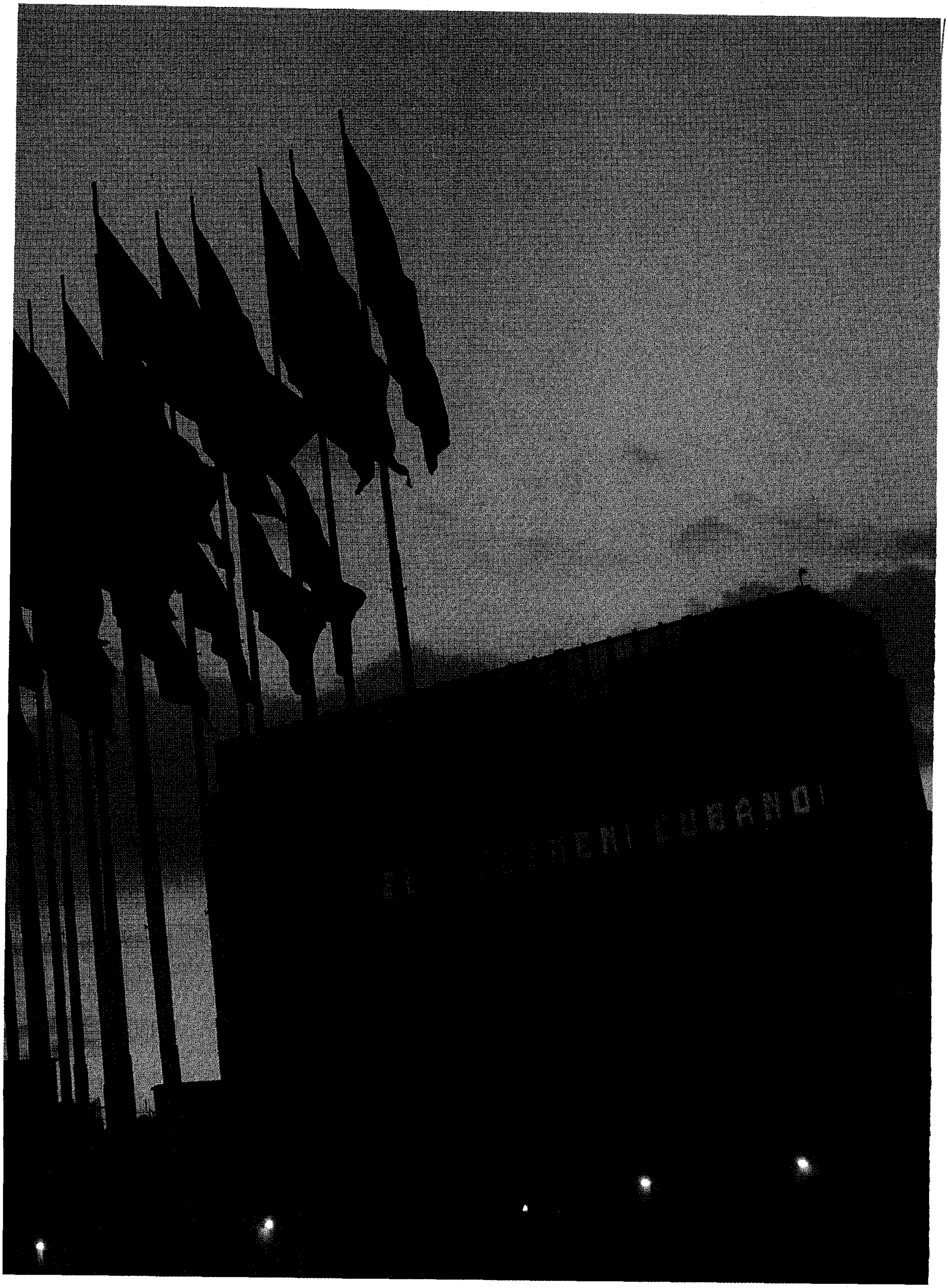
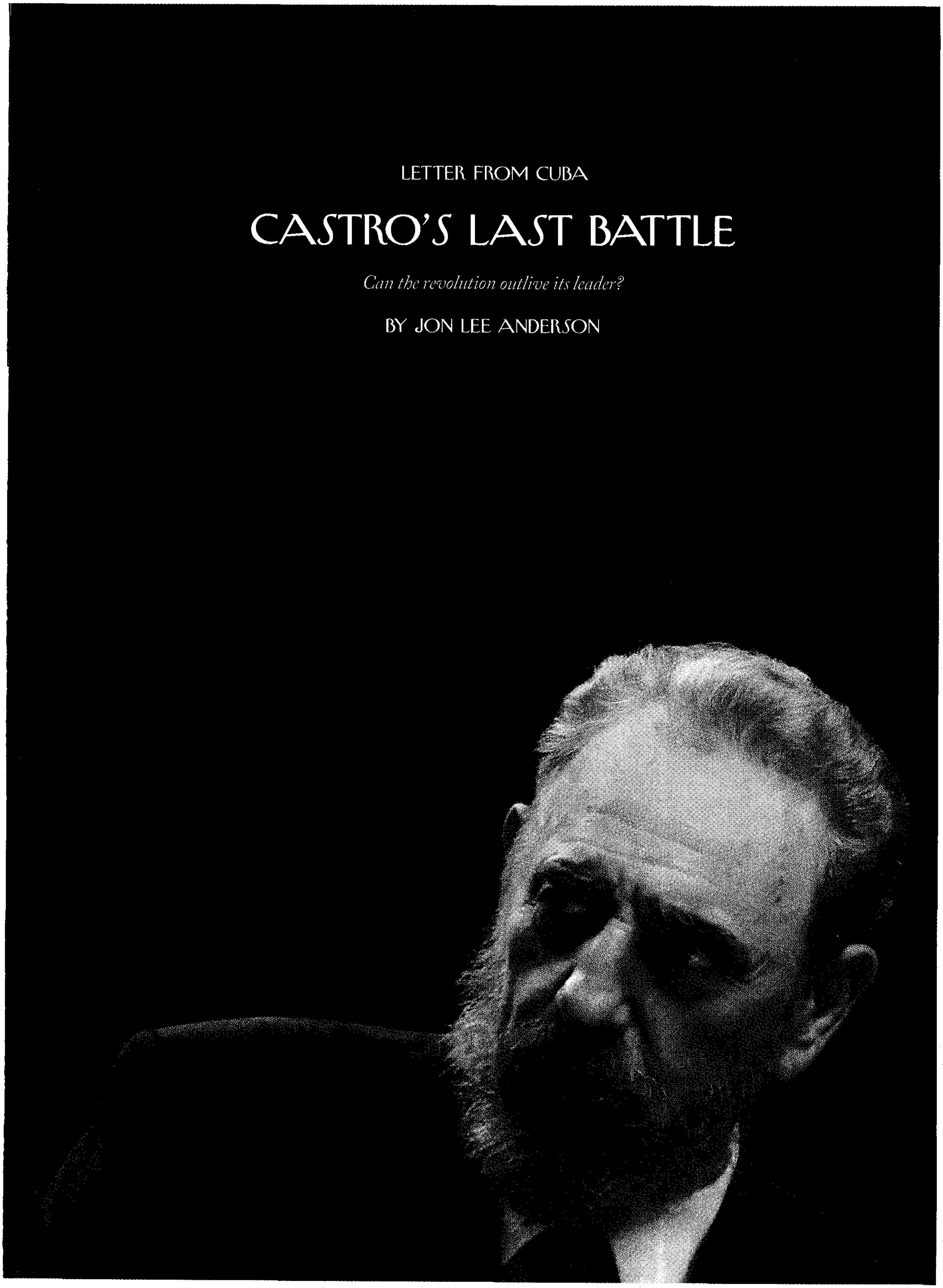

CUBANO

LETTER FROM CUBA

CASTRO'S LAST BATTLE

Can the revolution outlive its leader?

BY JON LEE ANDERSON



Late one Friday afternoon in March, a crowd gathered for a rally in downtown Havana to denounce an incident that had occurred the previous evening in San Juan, Puerto Rico. During a game between Cuba and the Netherlands in the first international Baseball Classic, a spectator held up a sign to the television cameras which said "Abajo Fidel"—"Down with Fidel"—and shouted similar sentiments to the Cubans on the field. Among them was Antonio Castro, an orthopedic surgeon, who is the Cuban team's doctor and one of Fidel Castro's sons. A Cuban official angrily confronted the protester, whereupon Puerto Rican policemen detained him. He was released after receiving a lecture about freedom of speech. Cuba won, 11–2, but the following day, in a tone of high umbrage, Cuba's official Communist Party newspaper, *Granma*, decried the "cynical counter-revolutionary provocations" of U.S. and Puerto Rican officials.

The rally was held, as are most such events in Havana these days, outside the U.S. Interests Section, a sleek seven-story building on a curving stretch of Havana's seaside promenade, the Malecón. In the absence of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, the Interests Section serves as the de-facto embassy. (The building is technically part of the Swiss Embassy.) Six years ago, during the custody battle over Elián González, the five-year-old boy who was rescued after his mother and others drowned while trying to reach Florida in a motorboat, Castro ordered the construction of a permanent protest forum on a traffic island in front of the Interests Section. Today, the Anti-Imperialist Tribunal, as it is known, consists of a raised stage studded with klieg lights atop a bunker-like command center. A large banner bears a photomontage of men with guns, houses burning, people weeping, and the baleful verdict "You did this."

The rally was not open to the general public. Guarding the approaches at road barricades were several dozen policemen. A few hundred people, mostly sports officials, athletes, and their relatives, listened as a baseball player told the crowd, "In the face of the shameless robbery of our players, and the constant attacks against our people, they have still not been able to undermine the quality of our team!" An elderly black man got up onstage and said that in his youth he had played baseball in the United States. "I learned of that country's racism personally when I was forced to sit in the back of buses, eat in kitchens," he said. He was followed by the mother of one of the ballplayers. After denouncing the "provocation" in Puerto Rico, she signed off with "*Viva* Fidel!"

Fidel wasn't there, although, like most Cubans, he takes baseball very seriously. (For years, there was a popular myth that as a student he was scouted by an American major-league team.) Castro, who will celebrate his eightieth birthday on August 13th, appears less and less frequently in public, and only rarely at events where foreigners are present. For decades, Castro's legendary stamina served him well. He was thirty-two when he overthrew Cuba's dictator, Fulgencio Batista, in 1959, with a guerrilla army of bearded fighters that included Ernesto (Che) Guevara. Castro presented himself as a nationalist, determined to eradicate Cuba's gangster-run casino culture and end its reputation as "the whorehouse of the Caribbean." Once in power, he moved quickly to the left, nationalizing large plantations (his mother's was among those seized) and foreign-owned businesses, and moved closer to the Soviet Union. In 1961, the C.I.A., with the help of Cuban émigrés, organized the Bay of Pigs invasion to remove Castro from power. The invasion was ignominiously defeated, and since then, despite a U.S. trade embargo and numerous assassination attempts, Fidel Castro has outlasted nine American Presidents. He is the world's longest-serving ruler.

In June, 2001, Castro fainted from heat exhaustion during a lengthy public address, and in 2004, after delivering a speech, he stumbled and fell, shattering his left kneecap and breaking his right arm. Although he still gives the long speeches for which he is famous, his hands sometimes tremble and he walks unsteadily; he has occasional bouts of forgetfulness and incoherence; and he sometimes falls asleep in public. In briefings to Congress last year, the C.I.A. reported that Castro was suffering from Parkinson's disease. Castro has mocked the report and said that, even if it were true, he would be able to stay in office—citing Pope John Paul II as his model.

This spring, a friend of Castro's, a veteran Party loyalist, told me that the Cuban leader was *angustiado*—literally, "anguished"—over his advancing years, and obsessed by the idea that socialism might not survive him. As a result, Castro has launched his last great fight, which he calls the Battle of Ideas.

Castro's goal is to reëngage Cubans with the ideals of the revolution, especially young Cubans who came of age during what he called the Special Period.

"Their bookshelves look more convincingly read from than ours."

In the early nineties, the collapse of the Soviet Union brought a precipitous end to Cuba's subsidies, and the economy imploded. The crisis forced Castro to allow greater openness in the island's economic and civil life, but he now seems determined to reverse that. In a speech last November, Castro said, "This country can self-destruct, this revolution can destroy itself." Referring to the Americans, he said, "They cannot destroy it, but we can. We can destroy it, and it would be our fault." And in May, during an angry, seven-hour televised panel discussion that he convened to protest his appearance on the *Forbes* list of the world's richest leaders (the magazine estimated his net worth at nine hundred million dollars), Castro said, "We must continue to pulverize the lies that are told against us. . . .This is the ideological battle, *everything* is the Battle of Ideas."

Castro has approached the campaign in the manner of a field marshal, with a Central Command of ideological loyalists drawn from the Communist Youth Union, the U.J.C. Some Cubans refer to them sarcastically as "the Taliban." A better analogy might be the Red Guards: the Battle of Ideas has, in a sense, become Cuba's Cultural Revolution, although it does not have the same violent intensity. Castro's Central Command organizes marches and dispatches specially recruited "battalions" of Trabajadores Sociales, or Social Workers, which now intervene in most areas of daily life. Earlier this year, when Castro announced that Cubans should begin using more energy-efficient light bulbs, the battalions went from house to house across the country to deliver the bulbs and make sure that they were installed.

Privately, many Cubans regard the Battle of Ideas as a spectacle they must tolerate but which is irrelevant to their lives. Most of them do not earn enough money to eat well, much less live comfortably. As a result of the island's endemic shortages, almost everyone has some contact with Cuba's black market. The tension between the public Cuba of rallies and tribunals and this hidden one is growing, and a number of Cubans and American officials I spoke to fear that the pent-up chaos could erupt into open unrest upon Castro's death: looting, rioting, and revenge killings. Senator Mel Martinez, of Florida, who left Cuba as a fifteen-year-old, in 1962, said, "My hope is that there will be one of those wonderful European revolutions, like the Velvet Revolution, without violence, but because of what's gone on—the repression and the iron grip of those in power for so long—there could be a vacuum, and that creates a potential for violence." Cubans worry about how the United States, and the exile community in Miami—which has been poised for Castro's departure for decades—will respond. For them, and for Castro's possible successors, this is an exceedingly anxious time.

Jokes about Fidel Castro's putative immortality once formed a canon in Havana. In one, Castro is presented with the gift of a Galápagos turtle, but he declines it after learning that it might live for more than a hundred years. "That's the problem with pets," Castro says. "You get attached to them, and then they die on you." Most jokes now start from the opposite premise. For example: Castro has died, and his body is lying in state. Mourners have lined up to pay their respects. At the head of the line is Felipe Pérez Roque, Cuba's forty-one-year-old Foreign Minister, who is often called Felipito. (Behind his back, he is also called a Taliban.) Pérez Roque stands before Castro's coffin, his head bowed, while Ricardo Alarcón, the president of Cuba's National Assembly, waits his turn. The minutes drag on; Alarcón becomes impatient and taps Pérez Roque on the shoulder, whispering, "Felipito, what are you waiting for? He's dead, you know." Pérez Roque whispers back, "*I* know he is; I just haven't figured out how to tell *him* that."

Very few Cubans will speak on the record about "the succession." Castro recently confirmed that, as many Cubans believed, he expected his brother Raúl, who is the Defense Minister, to inherit the leadership of Cuba's Communist Party. In an interview with a European journalist, he said that he had "no doubt" that if he died the National Assembly would elect Raúl. But because of Raúl's own age—he is seventy-five—the received wisdom in Havana is that he will share power with a civilian triumvirate made up of Pérez Roque; Alarcón, who is sixty-nine; and Carlos Lage, the country's economics czar, who is fifty-four. Aurelio Alonso, a sociologist and editor who is a Communist Party member, told me, "This used to be a taboo subject, but Fidel has begun to speak about it lately. Anyway, Fidel's exit doesn't concern me in terms of who succeeds him; it's known that there is a relief team prepared"—he mentioned Alarcón, Pérez Roque, and Lage. "This doesn't mean there won't be upset. There will be."

One evening in April, I met with Alarcón in the Baroque Presidential Salon of the venerable Hotel Nacional. The Nacional, with rooms that overlook the Malecón, was built in 1930, and in its pre-Castro heyday it was the Havana residence of gangsters like Meyer Lansky. Today, it is the hotel of choice for visitors like Leonardo DiCaprio, Muhammad Ali, and Naomi Campbell. As we looked at our menus, the manager informed me that Al Capone had once dined in the same room.

Hearing this, Alarcón smiled somewhat uncomfortably. He is a slim, loquacious man with a boyish face and a prominent forehead, and was wearing, as usual, a white guayabera shirt. He began speaking about Cuba's long and complicated relationship with the United States. "Fifty years of the same U.S. policy, which is, it has to be said, a failed one," he said. "Of course, now they are waiting for the next generation, based on the idea that this government is finished. Well, if that's the way it is, I guess I'm done with, too, because I'm a member of the outgoing generation." Alarcón paused. "A half century in France passed from the time of the monarchy of Louis XVI, the great revolution, the guillotine, all the counterrevolution that ensued, Bonapartism, the bourgeois republic of the thirties. All the twists and turns that France underwent took place in the same period of time that we have managed to keep the Cuban revolution in power. Not even Robespierre could say that; Napoleon couldn't say that. Hey, we've done a lot!"

Alarcón has dealt with Americans for more than forty years. He left Havana University to head the Foreign Ministry's U.S. office in 1962, when he was only twenty-five, and became Cuba's Ambassador to the United Nations in 1966. In 1992, Castro made him Foreign Minister but, less than a year later, moved him to the comparatively low-profile post of president of the National Assembly. At

PREVIOUS SPREAD: LEFT, PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS DWORZAK/MAGNUM; RIGHT, PHOTOGRAPH BY EDGARDO GARRIDO/ARCHIVOLATINO/REDUX

the time, the position was widely seen as a demotion, but it gave Alarcón experience with domestic politics in Cuba for the first time since his youth. And he has continued to be Castro's chief adviser on the United States. (He interrupted our dinner at the Hotel Nacional to take a call on his cell phone from Castro.) Alarcón was also intimately involved in the case of Elián González, acting as the chief adviser to the boy's father, Juan Miguel González, who travelled to the United States to fight relatives in Miami for custody of his son. Two and a half months later, when Elián was finally flown home, Alarcón greeted him at the airport. For Castro, Elián's return was a major symbolic victory over his opponents in the exile community.

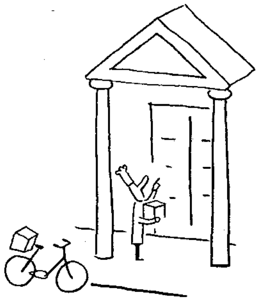
Alarcón's latest cause involves the Five Heroes, as they are known in Cuba—five Cuban spies who are serving prison terms in the United States. In January, 1996, Alarcón, in the midst of secret negotiations with the Clinton Administration about improving relations, told the Americans that Cuba had received information that Brothers to the Rescue, a Miami exile group, was planning illegal flights to drop leaflets over Havana. They had made such flights before, and the Administration had offered to do what it could to stop them. The White House passed Alarcón's information on to Florida's F.B.I. headquarters, but nothing was done to prevent the aircraft from taking off. The Cuban Air Force shot down two of them, killing four Cuban-American men. In retaliation, President Clinton signed the Helms-Burton Law, tightening the embargo against Cuba. The F.B.I. also stepped up the search for Cuba's sources, and the Five were arrested in September, 1998. In 2001, a Miami jury found them guilty of charges that included "espionage conspiracy" and, in the case of one, the murder of the Brothers to the Rescue pilots. They were given sentences ranging from fifteen years to two consecutive life terms. (Last August, an appeals court ordered a new trial, saying that the men had not received a fair trial because of "pervasive community prejudice.")

Alarcón acknowledges that the Five were spies, but he argues that they intended the United States no harm, and that their sole purpose was to prevent terrorism. "Look, these were five people who were performing a mission," he said. "Just as the United States believes it should have a greater capacity to know and to predict, Cuba has for a long time had a need to defend ourselves, with the difference that the terrorism against Cuba has been sponsored by the United States."

Alarcón has made it his personal crusade to bring the Five home; every conversation with him turns to them. I asked him whether there was an element of guilty conscience involved. Hadn't Cuba indirectly betrayed the men's presence in Miami? Alarcón replied, "Don't think for a minute that Cuba gullibly gave out information that somehow gave the Americans leads to find them. We may be amateurs in baseball, but in this subject we really are professionals."

Like most of those in Castro's inner circle, Alarcón is determinedly self-effacing in public and never contradicts his boss, but because of his amiability and his long experience with Americans—who generally like him—most Cubans see him as a moderate. He is a familiar and reassuring figure for foreigners visiting Cuba; while I was in Havana, he hosted a delegation from Vietnam, and also Louis Farrakhan. Alarcón has long been a top contender for the position of Prime Minister in a transitional government. But nothing is certain; Castro has been known to abruptly shift people from one position to another. Alarcón may also have serious competition from Pérez Roque, who is perceived as the chief spokesman in Castro's Battle of Ideas.

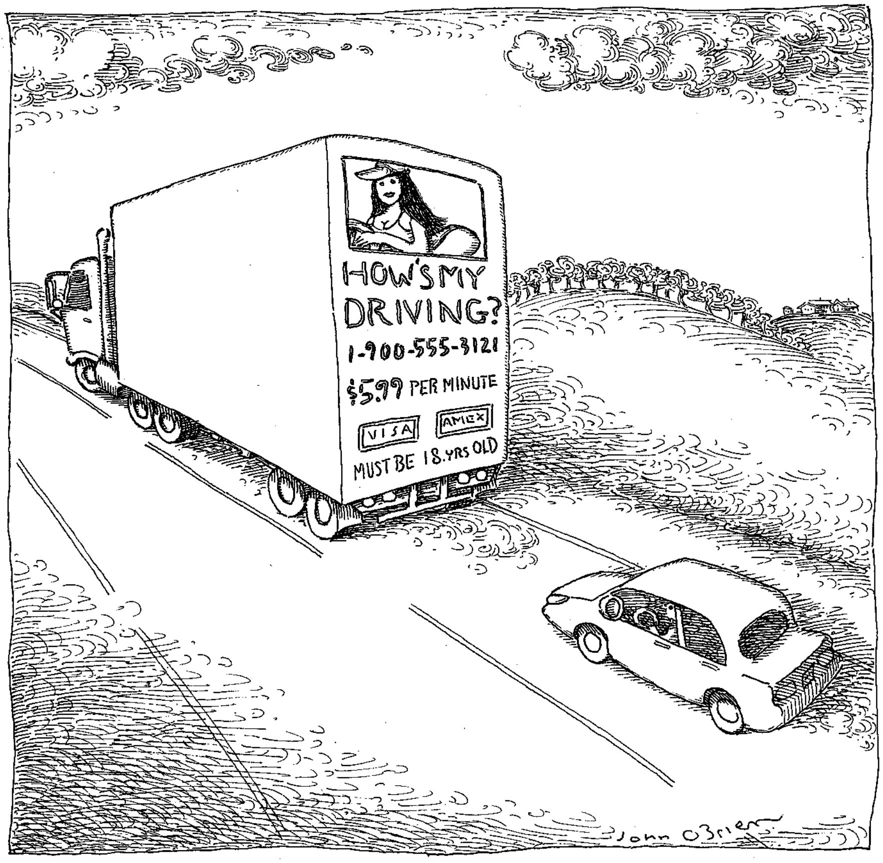
Pérez Roque is a short, wide-bodied man whose demeanor is reminiscent of a bull terrier's. He became Castro's personal secretary at the age of twenty-one, and remained in the job for seven years. No one doubts that he is devoted to Castro, whose opinions and policies he assumes with a fervency that is unparalleled, even in Cuba. In 1999, Castro made him his Foreign Minister. Pérez Roque was only thirty-four, and seemed gauche and ill-prepared; he was nicknamed Fax, in the sense that he was merely a transmitter of Castro's utterances. He has grown into the role, though, and earned a measure of respect, if not popularity. The veteran loyalist told me that it was clear that Castro had "chosen" Pérez Roque to lead the succession team under Raúl's temporary supervision, but that Pérez Roque was "too narrow-minded" for the next generation of Cubans. Other Cubans I talked to agreed. Everyone recalled how, after Castro fainted in 2001, it was Pérez Roque who stepped up to the microphone and, in a display of zeal, rallied the crowd with shouts of "*Viva* Fidel! *Viva* Raúl!"



I lived in Havana during the Special Period. The government couldn't afford to import fuel; bicycles replaced cars on Havana's streets, and there were daily blackouts lasting up to twelve hours. Many people did not have enough to eat, subsisting on the Cuban staple *chícharo*—split-pea porridge—or on sugar and water. Crime spiralled. Castro responded by permitting limited private enterprise and the legal use of the dollar, and by opening Cuba to mass tourism, measures that saved the regime.

In the past year, Castro—empowered by shipments of cheap oil from Hugo Chávez, the President of Venezuela, and by Chinese investments—imposed a heavy tax on dollar transactions. This has made Cuba much more expensive for foreigners, although European package tourists continue to stay in all-inclusive beach resorts, where they have little contact with Cubans. This seems to be the way Castro wants it. "Fidel has always felt revulsion toward tourism, because it encourages prostitution and increases social inequalities," Aurelio Alonso told me. "Tourism is bad because it creates a contrast between a population that lives very badly and a population that lives very well." In a recent speech, Castro referred to Cuba's family-run private restaurants, *paladares*, another Special Period concession, saying, "I know this pains our neighbors to the north, but it could well be that in a few years there will be no *paladares* left in Cuba."

The reforms of the Special Period



were carried out by Carlos Lage, the third member of the relief team. Lately, however, Lage appears to have been sidelined, at least in terms of domestic economic policy; instead, one Party insider told me, Castro was micromanaging it. "This has people worried, because, as we all know, the economy is not Fidel's strong suit," she said.

An Eastern European diplomat said, "To me, the one distinguishing feature of this dictatorship"—he added quickly, "But please don't use that word!"—"is how Fidel is building what comes afterward. His problem was that, after he opened up the economy, in the nineties, a new social stratum appeared here; it has its own political views and has produced leaders who supported those views. After some stabilization of the economic situation, Cuba's leaders began to think about how to get rid of those social strata." He went on, "I think they are doing all of this to prepare for the social problems that are inevitable when Fidel dies."

The contradictions of Cuban society are unsettlingly evident. Satellite-television dishes are banned, but many people install them secretly, and often tune in to anti-Castro Miami stations. The prostitutes who congregated openly on Havana's streets in the hard years of the nineties are less visible today, but, despite a crackdown on the sex trade, they are still around. One evening, I went to a popular Havana night spot directly across the Plaza de la Revolución from the headquarters of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee. It was swarming with young *jineteras*, as they are called, and their foreign—mostly much older Italian or Spanish—"boyfriends." One girl, who asked if I wanted a "date," looked fifteen, or younger.

I visited a veteran Party member who, as we sat on her terrace drinking tamarind juice, complained at length about Castro's most recent drive—a grandiloquently proclaimed energy-saving campaign, one of the central features of which is to provide every Cuban household with a new Chinese-manufactured pressure cooker. "After forty-seven years of revolution, we get pressure cookers?" she said bitterly. They were not even free. "Energy is his latest obsession, and, like all of his other obsessions in the past"—she listed a few of the more quixotic ones, including Castro's doomed effort, in the eighties, to breed a "super-cow"—"we have no choice but to go along with them."

She told me that it was time for Castro to step down. "When I see Fidel speaking nowadays, it's as if I am seeing my great-grandfather there, talking away for no reason in particular. He's got nothing to say anymore. It's a great pity, too," she said. "The people here still respect him—even though they don't listen to him anymore. After him, there's no one else. So his successors are going to open up, because they will have to; they aren't stupid. The people are fed up."

One Sunday afternoon, I went to Lenin Park, on the outskirts of Havana. A salsa band was playing for a crowd of four or five hundred mostly young people, who were dancing and drinking beer from paper cups. When the concert ended, a couple of hundred youths began walking out of the park along the road to the city.

A police van was parked in the middle of the road, with a dozen blue-uniformed officers standing around. Suddenly, one of them hit a teen-ager with his nightstick. Other officers came over and joined in, kicking and hitting the boy. Then they dragged him to the van and threw him into the back. Several youths were holding their faces with their hands and stumbling, and I realized that the officers had blinded them with pepper spray.

In the next five minutes or so, the officers beat and arrested eight or nine young men, none of whom, as far as I could tell, had done anything to provoke them. People in the crowd simply stared, or moved away, out of striking range of the policemen. I asked a man what the youths had done, and he said quietly, "Nothing. Someone probably mouthed off to one of them. The cops are just trying to show who's boss. They always do this."

The onlookers might be far less restrained in Castro's absence. During the summer of 1994, at the height of the Special Period, after clashes between the authorities and would-be migrants, hundreds of men and youths rioted along the Malecón. Castro went to the scene and, with his nervous bodyguards, waded into the melee. The rioters were holding

"Congratulations! Now you get to eat bugs!"

• •

rocks and bricks, but when they saw Castro they dropped them and applauded. The tumult, which had been expanding dangerously, began to dissipate. After Castro left, police riot squads arrived, along with truckloads of stick-wielding men from an élite workers' brigade, who then chased, beat, and arrested the remaining rioters.

It is hard to imagine any of Castro's potential successors having the authority to pull off such a move, and a bout of unrest might spread across the island if left unchecked, or if the security forces overreact. If Raúl is in charge, moderation will not be a foregone conclusion. Despite his reputation for warmth, Raúl can be impulsive, dogmatic, and, at times, brutal. In 1959, he oversaw the surrender of Santiago, Cuba's second-largest city, while Castro made his way toward Havana. There, in the most notorious act of retribution to follow the guerrillas' victory, Raúl presided over the execution of more than seventy soldiers and officers, who were machine-gunned and then dumped into a pit. More recently, in 1996, Raúl orchestrated a purge of Party intellectuals, whom he accused of being contaminated by "capitalist ideas."

In the past few years, Castro has increased the number of police officers in Havana considerably, and given them salaries equivalent to those earned by doctors. Many of the police are drawn from Cuba's rural eastern provinces, where the government has strong support, and are held in contempt by many of the comparatively cosmopolitan *habañeros*.

After the 1994 riots, Castro relieved some of the pressure on the regime by temporarily allowing people to leave the island by sea. As many as thirty thousand Cubans tried to reach Florida in the space of three weeks, in what became known as the "rafters' crisis." To forestall another sea exodus, the U.S. significantly increased its legal immigration quota for Cubans and instituted a "dry foot, wet foot" policy, under which those intercepted at sea by the Coast Guard are deported and those who manage to reach dry land are allowed to stay. This reduced the numbers for a while, but last year almost three thousand Cubans were stopped at sea and repatriated—double the figure for 2004. There are fears both in Cuba and in the United States that social instability after Castro's death could provoke a huge wave of emigration. According to some scenarios, this could be used to justify American military intervention.

Many young people in Cuba today wish for nothing more than to emigrate. On my latest trip, a longtime Party member confessed that he had recently helped his own son leave Cuba. "We have a lot of very good young people, but they don't like to be administered," he said. "And I'm afraid that the revolution has not yet learned that the consciences of others do not need to be administered."

Randy Alonso Falcón, who is thirty-six, is one of the most recognizable figures in the Battle of Ideas. Alonso, the host of the political talk show "La Mesa Redonda Informativa"—"The News Round Table"—is on the national directorate of the Communist Youth Union, and is also a member of the Central Command for the Battle of Ideas. Everyone calls him Randy.

One morning in April, I met Alonso, a short man with an easygoing demeanor and a heavily pockmarked face, outside the Anti-Imperialist Tribunal. He gestured toward the Tribunal's most recent innovation, the Mount of Flags, a cluster of a hundred and thirty-eight steel poles, as high as a hundred feet and rising from a series of concrete plinths, flying black flags that block the view of the Interests Section from the street. The Mount of Flags was Castro's response to the U.S. chargé d'affaires' installation, in January, of an electronic ticker in the Section's windows, offering uncensored news reports twenty-four hours a day. To make room for the flags, the Cubans had appropriated the Americans' parking lot. "Naturally, if they are going to fuck with us, we will fuck them, too," Alonso said.

We drove east out of Havana to the Villa Panamericana, a complex of sports facilities built to host the 1991 Pan American Games. One building had been converted into the School for Social Workers. Begun in 2000 for underprivileged—and potentially antisocial—youths, the school had turned out more than ten thousand graduates, and its alumni form the core of the Social Workers battalions. Alonso said that the leaders of the Battle of Ideas decided where to deploy the battalions by studying secret "opinion polls." "Every day, we receive five thousand opinions that we get from across the country," he told me. "It's not a survey. There are activists who hear things, and then they send in exactly what was said." These polls, if they can properly be called that, are one of Castro's favorite sources of information.

At the school, a large, rambling prefab concrete facility, we joined Enrique Cabezas Gómez, the director, who is one of Castro's protégés. He invited us into a reception room with three of his students, and began a disquisition on the school's role in the Battle of Ideas. He continued, without pausing, for three hours.

As he spoke, the students listened quietly. It was hard to gauge their enthusiasm. Cabezas mentioned that recently, when Castro, as part of an ongoing Battle of Ideas anti-corruption drive, replaced employees at Cuba's gas stations with the Social Workers, they unearthed systemic graft and theft. Some Cubans I spoke to predicted that it was just a matter of time before the Social Workers themselves were corrupted. Most didn't believe that the anti-corruption campaign would work, because the many ruses that Cubans had devised for their survival were too deeply embedded. One Cuban told me that after the government had a fleet of cargo trucks equipped with G.P.S. to prevent pilferage, the drivers figured out how to use condoms filled with water to disable the devices. Confirming this story, a Western European diplomat told me that his biggest concern for Cuba's future was the prospect that a powerful network of criminal Mafias would emerge, as they had in the former European Socialist states.

In Havana, I visited a Cuban couple whom I've known for many years, and was shocked to see how they were living. Some of their furniture had been sold, and they both looked thin. Now in their sixties, they were getting by on the equivalent of about sixty dollars a month—more, in fact, than most Cubans earn. The wife told me, "You know, to live in Cuba we have only three alternatives, known as the three R's—*robar, remar*, or *rezingarse*." *Robar* is "to steal." *Remar* is "to row"—as in to take a boat to Florida. *Rezingarse* is a play on the word *resignarse*, "to resign oneself," but in Cuban slang *zingar* is "to fuck," so *rezingarse* means, literally, "to fuck yourself."

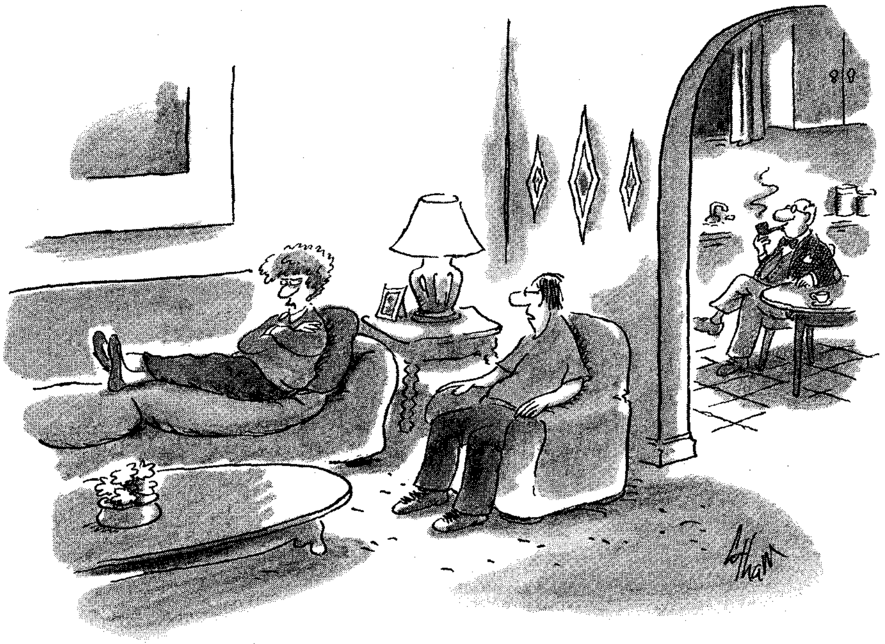
On June 2nd, the day before Raúl Castro's seventy-fifth birthday, *Granma* published an eight-page special supplement titled "Raúl Up Close." The article included headings such as "The Chief," "Patriotic Values," and "Capable, Responsible, and Brilliant." In a typical passage, Raúl is described as "affable, affectionate, human, understanding; who knows how to be serious and demanding but is, at the same time, friendly and capable of listening to a story or enjoying a joke—a profoundly human being." The article ends with Fidel explaining why Raúl should succeed him: "I choose him not because he is my brother, because the whole world knows how much we hate nepotism, but because on my honor I consider him to have sufficient qualities to substitute for me tomorrow in case I die in this struggle."

A couple of days later, I received an e-mail from a friend in Havana about the supplement: "Everyone here thinks this means 'the electoral campaign' has begun"—that is, the campaign to prepare Cubans for Raúl's succession to power.

Raúl rarely appears in public with his older brother. Foreign journalists are never invited to his speeches, and he never grants interviews. In my visits to Cuba during the past fifteen years, I have seen Raúl only once in person, at the annual May Day rally in the Plaza de la Revolución, in 1993. He had joined the rest of the Politburo on a podium, standing near, but not next to, Fidel. While Fidel gazed solemnly over the proceedings, Raúl bantered with the others.

In those days, a mantle of secrecy surrounded the Castro clan. Most Cubans did not know the name of Castro's wife, or even how many children they had. Since then, however, several members of Cuba's First Family have begun a kind of gradual début that seems intended to prepare them for more public roles. Dalia Soto del Valle, Castro's wife of some forty years (it is not clear when, or whether, they were legally married), has become more visible since the Elián González standoff. She is the mother of five of his sons: Alexis, Alexander, Alejandro (Castro has a fascination with Alexander the Great), Antonio, and Angel. In 2000, I had lunch with Antonio Castro, the oldest, at the orthopedic hospital in Havana, where he was doing his residency before signing on with the baseball team; he was polite but reserved. Alexis was rumored to be the more troubled son; a couple of years ago, however, he began appearing at events as a photographer for *Juventud Rebelde*, the U.J.C. newspaper. The less known brothers are Alexander, who works as a cameraman for Cuban television; Alejandro, who is a computer programmer; and Angel, the youngest, who is not known to have found a profession.

Castro divorced his first wife, Mirta Díaz-Balart, the mother of his firstborn son, Fidel, in 1955. She remarried and has lived in Madrid for many years, though she often travels to Cuba to visit her son. She has never spoken publicly about her former husband, but her nephew, Lincoln Díaz-Balart, a Repub-



"You're just mad because I found a scholar to back me up."

lican congressman from Florida, is one of Castro's most ardent critics. Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart, or Fidelito, is a Soviet-educated nuclear physicist, and ran Cuba's atomic-energy commission until the early nineties, when he was removed from the post; Castro said during a trip to Spain that he had fired his son for "incompetence." Lately, however, Fidelito has reëmerged, and is now said to be an adviser to his father. One evening last April, I was at a restaurant in Old Havana when a chauffeur-driven Lada pulled up, and Fidelito came in. He had a beard and bore a striking resemblance to his father, with the same pronounced Roman nose and proud profile. It was as if Fidel Castro himself, thirty years younger, had just walked by.

Castro also has a daughter, Alina Fernández, the product of his affair with a society woman, Naty Revuelta, in the late fifties. In 1993, Alina, who had long been estranged from her father, fled to Europe in disguise and later settled in Miami, where she hosts a radio show, "Simply Alina," dedicated to attacking him.

Raúl Castro and his M.I.T.-educated wife, Vilma Espín, the head of the Cuban Women's Federation, have four children, and they, too, have been more visible lately. When I had dinner with Ricardo Alarcón this spring, he told me that Raúl's eldest daughter, Mariela Castro Espín, a sexologist, had been lobbying the National Assembly to reform Cuba's laws on behalf of transsexuals and transvestites. She has been "driving me crazy," Alarcón said, laughing.

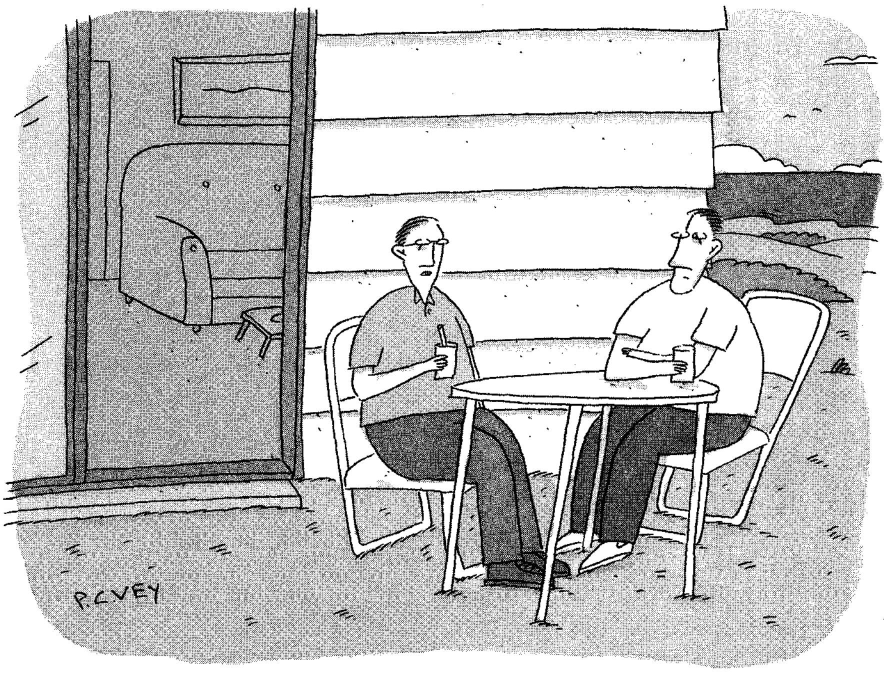
I had heard about Mariela's role as the godmother of Cuba's transsexuals and transvestites when I attended a transvestite show at a house in western Havana. The occasion was the birthday of Imperio, one of the island's most famous *transformistas* (as transvestites who perform in cabarets are called), a slim, handsome mixed-race man in his mid-thirties. In a large upstairs room, there was a bar, and a hundred or more gay men applauded and blew kisses as Imperio danced and lip-synched to songs by Gloria Gaynor and Rocío Jurado. I was struck by the openness of the event; I had been to a transvestite show in Havana in the late nineties, but it was a clandestine affair. Until very recently, Cuba's gays, and transvestites in particular, were harassed and frequently arrested by the police. Imperio's friends told me that the change was due to Mariela Castro.

I went to see Mariela Castro at the Instituto Nacional de Educación Sexual, CENESEX, which is housed in an old nineteenth-century mansion in the Vedado district, with a wide porch and shade trees on the grounds. Mariela, an attractive, relaxed-looking woman in her late thirties, has been the director of CENESEX since 2000. We sat down in a small upstairs office to talk.

"Look, a lot of people think that we've been able to do what we've done because of family relations," she said. "On the contrary, sometimes family connections are an obstacle in life—I can't make my proposals through my father or mother, because neither of them would allow that. Whatever I do, I do through official channels. What happens, though, is that when I go to these official channels the people don't know how to react, because of my family connections. They ask, 'What does your father say about this?' And I say, 'It doesn't matter what my father says.' "

Three years ago, Mariela said, some transvestites complained to her that the police were harassing them, and asked for her help. "I felt really bad for them, because I felt that the revolution had some very beautiful proposals, but changing people's attitudes takes a lot longer than we would sometimes like." When there are problems with the police, "we go straight to the police station," she said. "Speaking honestly, the cultural level of the policemen is not always good." She had spoken to the Ministry of Defense—run by her father—but said that initially it had been difficult to convince her father that there was a need for change.

In the sixties and seventies, the military, under Raúl's control, presided over notorious camps known by the acronym UMAP (for Military Units to Help Production), where homosexuals, including Reinaldo Arenas, the late author of "Before Night Falls"—as well as some unemployed and religious Cubans—were "rehabilitated" through forced labor. During the eighties, men who were H.I.V.-positive were forcibly quarantined in medical asylums known colloquially as *sidatorios* ("AIDS," in Spanish, is SIDA). In the past decade, official policies have relaxed, but laws guaranteeing sexual freedom are still nonexistent. Mariela told me that her legal team was preparing a brief that proposed specific changes in the penal and civil code; for example, transsexuals who had had sex-change operations would be able to marry and to enjoy the same inheritance and pension rights as heterosexual



"If the universe is expanding, that's all the more reason to get back to the city."

spouses. She said that her next project was to secure similar rights for Cuba's gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

First, though, Mariela was enlisting the transvestites in the Battle of Ideas. "I thought it would be good if they had a social mission," she told me. She said that two groups of transvestites had already completed training as sexual-health Social Workers. "Every time we have a course graduation ceremony, we let them put on their transvestite shows right here—the whole spectacle, just as they like it to be. It may not be to my aesthetic taste"—Mariela smiled—"but it is theirs, and we respect that."

Both Mariela Castro and Ricardo Alarcón implied that the Battle of Ideas had initiated a sort of social and cultural opening. During our dinner at the Nacional, Alarcón mentioned that he had volunteered to inaugurate a recent exhibition of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe in Havana. "That raised some eyebrows," he said. Political openness is a different matter: over a four-day period in March, 2003, beginning the day before the United States invaded Iraq, Cuban authorities arrested seventy-eight dissidents, including labor unionists, human-rights activists, and journalists; many are still in jail. But the government seems serious about its initiatives in the arts—there are, for example, a host of new art and dance schools, and educational-extension programs—in part as a means of getting Cuba's youths off the streets.

Abel Prieto, Cuba's Culture Minister, told me, "The appetite for culture, the social prestige of the artist, of the intellectual, of the writer, has grown enormously. There was a time when parents thought that the arts would turn their sons into gays, or their daughters into sluts, but now everyone wants to have an artist in the family."

Prieto is well over six feet tall, and, with his muttonchop sideburns and shoulder-length hair, he cuts an incongruous figure as a senior Communist Party official. One of his proudest achievements was having one of Old Havana's plazas dubbed Lennon Park, with a bronze statue of John Lennon. (In the sixties, the Beatles' "decadent" music was banned.) He talks openly about using pirated programming on state television: "We don't pay copyright for television material—we are blockaded. So we take a lot from the Discovery Channel, for instance." When we visited Havana's main art museum, an entourage of admirers followed him from gallery to gallery.

Prieto had told me that the arts scene in Havana had become less conventional, and more "disquieting," though I saw little evidence of this at the museum. A couple of days later, however, I visited a fringe exhibition put on by students at the School of Fine Arts. Their work was much more political than what I had seen elsewhere in Havana. In one display, a Cuban peso coin with the official slogan "*Patria Libre o Muerte*" ("Free Fatherland or Death") had been cut so that it read, "*Patria Libre o Suerte*" ("Free Fatherland or Luck"). In one part of the room, an old reel-to-reel tape recorder and speaker blared out, in an endlessly repeating loop, an extract of a patriotic speech by Castro, and in front of it was a placard that read, "Just talk to me about baseball."

Castro's greatest obstacle, if he is to insure that his succession plan survives him, is the United States, which has, in effect, been trying to force a transition in Cuba for five decades. In that time, the relationship between Washington and the exile community in Miami has, more often than not, been unhealthily close. During the first years of Castro's rule, U.S. policy was to try to overthrow him by force, or to assassinate him. The C.I.A. set up an office in Miami—then its largest for clandestine operations—and recruited thousands of exiles, forming a paramilitary organization that attacked Cuba's interests. That aspect of the C.I.A.'s operations had mostly wound down in the seventies, but by then the *anticastristas* had formed groups of their own. Cuban exiles with C.I.A. links carried out bombings and assassinations aimed at Cuba and its allies, including the 1976 murder of Orlando Letelier, Chile's Ambassador to the United States, in Washington, D.C.

The hard-liners within Miami's Cuban-exile community are now mostly elderly men themselves, but they are still a volatile factor. Castro has used the case of Luis Posada Carriles to argue that America has a double standard in its war on terror. Posada Carriles, a Cuban who holds Venezuelan citizenship, has spent the past forty-five years trying to kill or depose Castro. He is wanted in Venezuela for allegedly helping to plan the midair bombing of a Cuban passenger jet near Barbados in October, 1976, which killed all seventy-three people on board. (Cubans, citing recently declassified C.I.A. and F.B.I. documents that appear to support them, accuse the agency of having had prior knowledge of the attack.) In between escaping from a Venezuelan jail and—as he admitted to the *Times*—planning the bombing of hotels in the summer of 1997, killing an Italian tourist, Posada Carriles worked for Oliver North's program to resupply the Contras in Nicaragua. Last year, he surfaced, holding a press conference in Miami, and Hugo Chávez demanded his extradition. Posada Carriles was detained, but after several months a federal judge ruled that although he had entered the country illegally, the U.S. would not deport him to Cuba or Venezuela, because he might be tortured. He is now appealing to remain in the United States, on the ground that he worked covertly on its behalf for many years.

In Miami, I met with Santiago Alvarez, a prominent Cuban exile and a close ally of Posada Carriles, in his office in a Hialeah strip mall. Alvarez, who runs a construction business, is a rough but good-looking man of sixty-four. "Look, Posada Carriles is not a saint. He is a Cuban freedom fighter, and he has made some mistakes," Alvarez said. "But what's happened here is that Fidel Castro has mounted a big show."

Alvarez went on, "As an *anticastrista*, I look upon Bush's attempt to harden the embargo with a certain pleasure. On the other hand, I can see how loosening it might well be the best weapon against Fidel. For instance, a relaxation on the restrictions of visits to the island—this could help us conspire against the regime. I do not believe that Fidel Castro will ever fall from power through the activities of a few dissidents. I maintain that he must be brought down by armed force."

Alvarez said that the time to attack is while Castro is still alive. "After Fidel dies, it will be a different game," he told me. "And what happens if he lasts another ten years? We can't wait that long. I would feel ashamed if I waited for him to die before I returned." (Soon after our meeting, Alvarez was arrested for illegal possession of machine guns and a grenade launcher. He is now awaiting trial.)

Senator Martinez didn't want to comment directly on the Posada Carriles case, because it was in the courts. But he denied that it had anything to do with the war on terror. "Cuba began the practice of hijacking airliners, and if Luis Posada Carriles bombed an airliner"—Martinez paused—"without condoning any specific act of violence, there *was* a hostile state of affairs at the time. This is no longer an issue and is just being used by a failed regime to keep people stoked up. We need to talk about the future, not the past."

In December, 2003, President Bush appointed Senator Martinez as co-chair of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, along with Colin Powell. Their mandate was to find ways to "hasten the end of Castro's tyranny," and to develop "a comprehensive strategy to prepare for a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba." The result of their work was a five-hundred-page report, issued in May, 2004, that included guidelines for everything from setting up a market economy to holding elections. It also recommends "undermining the regime's 'succession strategy.' "

"I looked for lessons from Iraq, for things the Cubans will need," Martinez told me. "For instance, a governmental structure should remain in place. As in Iraq, in Cuba there are those with blood on their hands, but that's not the case with everyone. And there are issues like the electrical grid, housing, and nutrition. What we learned in Iraq is that there would be a disruption of these things in an extraordinary moment."

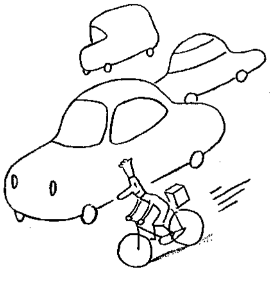
The report, which the Bush Administration adopted as policy, recommended the appointment of a Cuba transition coördinator. The person named to the new post was Caleb McCarry, whose previous position was staff director for the House Foreign Relations Committee's Western Hemisphere subcommittee. When I spoke with McCarry, he said, "My function is to be the senior U.S. official in charge of planning and supporting a genuine democratic transition in Cuba, and to work on it now." He is, in effect, the Paul Bremer designate of Cuba. As with Iraq, however, the United States is hampered by its inability to operate openly in Cuba, and by its reliance on information from exiles and dissidents. And it does not seem to have a candidate for Castro's replacement.

McCarry said that, while the transition would be in Cuban hands, "we will be there to offer very concrete support." The U.S. is already channelling money and aid to the opposition. Two leading dissidents, Osvaldo Paya and Elizardo Sánchez, have said that this tactic has been counterproductive, and criticized it as heavy-handed meddling. Many of the dissidents arrested in 2003 were accused of illegally receiving American funds. (In a speech, Castro called them "mercenaries.")

McCarry emphasized that the Administration would not regard the accession of Raúl Castro as a satisfactory outcome, even if it was accompanied by economic reforms. "We will continue to offer support for a *real* transition," he said. "You know, this is not an imposition. It's an offer, a very respectful offer, with respect for the sense of Cuban nationhood."

Not all exiles are in agreement with U.S. policy. Damian Fernández, a Cuban-American who runs the Cuba Research Institute, at Florida International University, told me, "There are some lessons to be learned from the experience in Iraq. Do we really want a transition, a clean break with the past, or do we want succession, which would mean keeping some of the old state and the orderliness that would bring? The fact is that it's unlikely there'll be a tabula rasa after Fidel dies. But this Administration has this line on transition that 'if we push we can make it happen.' "

In Havana, the so-called Bush Plan is regularly denounced on lurid billboards and by Castro's deputies. Felipe Pérez Roque said that the U.S. transition plan would "take away Cubans' land and their houses and schools, in order to return them to their old Batistiano owners, who would come back from the United States."



Cubans are receptive to such talk. Many are living in homes that were confiscated from owners who fled the country, and the prospect of being made homeless by returning exiles frightens them. "The day when Cubans will rise up is when the gentlemen from Miami arrive and try to appropriate people's homes, and to give orders," one Cuban academic told me. (Martinez, whose own childhood home is now a youth center, said that a "vehicle" might be devised to restore homes to exiles or to compensate them, but he acknowledged that Cubans on the island had a claim to them as well. "The last thing we want to do is make people who've suffered so much feel more insecure," he said. "I think the exiles should have a say, and I think it will be helpful, in terms of being able to provide resources and ideas. They can help lead Cuba to the economic miracle, which, given the Cuban people's abilities, I think it should have. It is also their right—I should say *our* right—to be allowed a role.")

In a speech in March, Ricardo Alarcón called the Bush Plan "annexationist and genocidal." In private, afterward, he was only slightly less adamant, telling me that it was "profoundly irresponsible, made up by people who prefer to ignore reality and who try and change it capriciously. Maybe it's a messianic thing."

He added, "For us, our relation with the U.S. is the one great theme, the big problem. There is no other single issue of such force, of such permanent and universal importance to us, than having the U.S. normalize relations with Cuba." Under the Bush Administration, all contacts have ceased, he told me, with the sole exception of low-level meetings over the "wet foot, dry foot" immigration policy. "There is nothing at all going on," he said. "*Nada*."

Cuba didn't win the Baseball Classic, but it came close. On the night of the final match, in San Diego on March 20th, against Japan, large video screens were set up around Havana. I watched in the Parque Central, in Old Havana, along with hundreds of Cubans. By the bottom of the first inning, when Cuba scored, the plaza had become an animated wall of noise and celebration. Cuba's winning streak didn't hold, however, and Japan won, 10–6. Even so, the next day officials in Havana orchestrated a huge homecoming for the team, with a victory procession through Havana, along streets filled with flag-waving Young Pioneers, culminating in a rally in the city's sports stadium which was presided over by Fidel Castro himself.

The stands of the sports stadium were filled with thousands of students and Social Workers. A huge placard showed Che Guevara's face in a Pop-art rendition of blue, red, and orange. I also noticed quite a few people wearing red T-shirts decorated with an image of Hugo Chávez.

We were waiting for Fidel. I stood among a group of Cuban newsmen. The first Politburo member to appear was the ancient General Guillermo García Frías, a former peasant and guerrilla fighter who is famous for his passion for cockfighting. Next came Ricardo Alarcón. As the minutes dragged on, the students in the stadium began chanting, "Fi-del! Fi-del!" Carlos Lage appeared next, and Chávez's brother Adan, Venezuela's Ambassador. Suddenly, everyone stood and, as a new roar came from the youths in the stands, I spotted Castro's bodyguard, José Delgado, a bald, bull-chested man with worried eyes. If Delgado was there, it meant that Castro was about to arrive.

Castro emerged from behind the tribune and, amid more cheers, took a seat. His personal secretary, Carlos Valenciaga, a pale man with spectacles and a large black portfolio, sat behind him. The ceremony began immediately. Dancers dressed in white *guajiro* peasant costumes were followed by modern dancers in yellow Lycra body stockings. Finally, Cuba's baseball team walked out and stood in formation, each player holding the hand of a small child in uniform, as a singer lauded them for turning down the offer of "millions of dollars" to "betray the fatherland." At the appropriate moments, Castro, like everyone else, waved a little Cuban flag.

A local journalist pointed out a pale, overweight photographer, and told me that he was Alexis Castro. Like the other photographers, Alexis spent more time staring up into the stands, watching his father, than he did watching the athletes, and periodically raised his camera, with its long zoom lens, to shoot pictures of him.

One by one, the players trooped up to greet Castro. He clapped each of them on the back, smiling, and presented them with new bats, which two young women in military tunics handed to him. When Antonio Castro, the team's doctor, stepped forward, however, he and his father shook hands formally. Then it was time for Castro to speak.

In a tone of grandfatherly admonishment, Castro said that so many Cubans had watched the Classic that "our electrical grid was at risk of collapsing." He said that what Cuba's team had achieved was colossal. "The fact that a modest little island in the Caribbean managed to compete against a country like Japan in an international sports event—this is an occurrence of great magnitude!"

Castro then began shuffling some clippings he had brought with him; he grumbled that they were out of order. A couple of minutes rolled by before he found what he was looking for, an article praising Cuba's performance in the Classic from one of the international wire agencies, and he proceeded to read it out loud. Castro's voice was tremulous. He finished reading the dispatch, and then he read another, and another, and another, for more than a half hour. The students in the bleachers around me were, by now, clearly bored. Many fidgeted or talked. Some slept. As Castro read commentaries from Miami's *El Nuevo Herald*, ESPN, and the BBC, it struck me that he was sharing information from sources that were out of bounds to most Cubans. But if he was aware of the paradox he didn't show it. When he was done with the articles, he talked for another hour about Cuba's achievements in medicine and education. The restless din in the stadium grew, but Castro seemed oblivious. I tried to read the faces of the members of the Politburo who were seated near Castro, but all I saw was their disciplined and neutral expressions. ♦

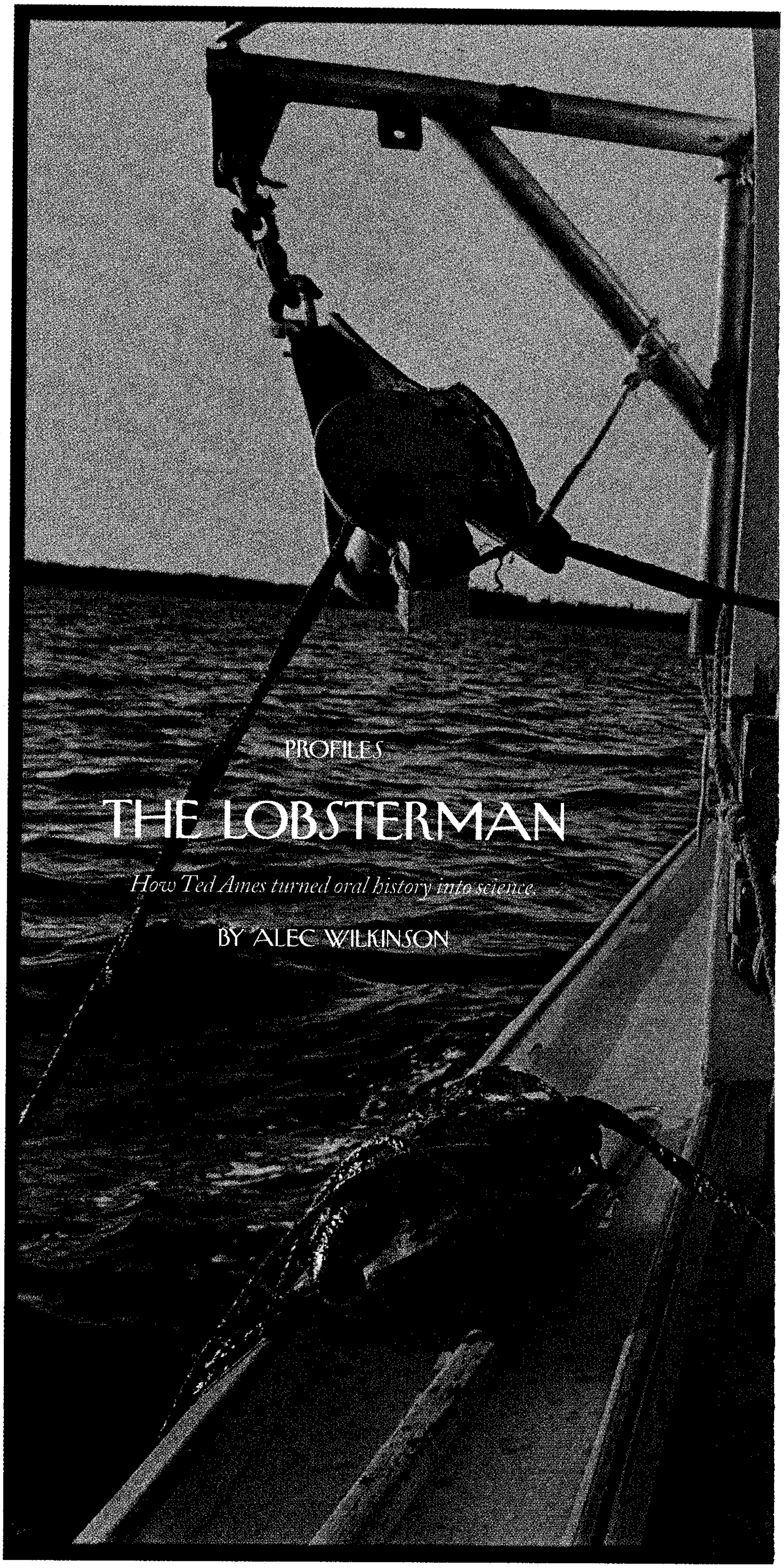
AL, THE GO-FROM GUY

PROFILES

THE LOBSTERMAN

How Ted Ames turned oral history into science.

BY ALEC WILKINSON



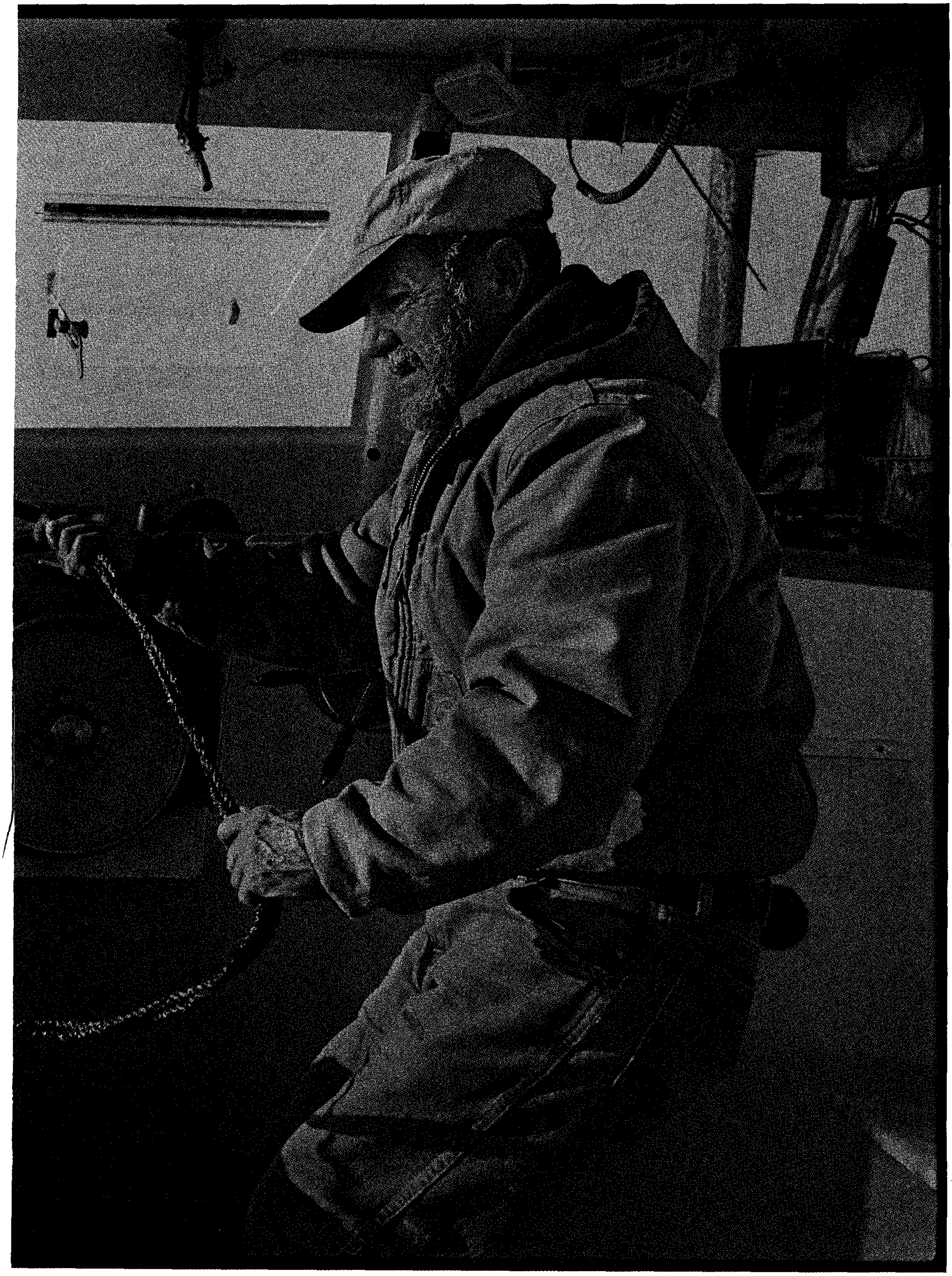
Ames fishing near Stonington, Maine. Ames says that his work has involved "building

A historical ecologist studies man's effect on a past landscape. The discipline requires an aptitude for science but also the ability to imagine things differently from the way they appear, which is not an ordinary habit of mind. Typically, a historical ecologist is an academic, a forester, or a government scientist. The only one of any prominence who is a commercial fisherman is Ted Ames. Ames is a lobsterman in Stonington, Maine, and his scientific specialty is ghost and remnant schools of fish, mainly cod.

There are no novels about a vengeful white cod. No newspaper has ever printed the headline "COD ATTACK!" The cod is a slow-moving fish, an inhabitant of cold and murky water. It is a deliberate but witless predator—rocks have been found in the stomachs of cod, and pieces of Styrofoam cups. Its skin is mottled, there is a startled look in its eye, and its mouth gapes. From its lower jaw a little string of flesh, called a barbel, hangs like a worm. It is nowhere regarded as a delicacy, but it is a very valuable fish, a staple, and has been for five hundred years; it is possibly the most valuable fish ever. In the Gulf of Maine, cod was so abundant that it was pursued with a kind of prodigal abandon. Fishermen—Ames and his father among them—seemed to feel that it had always been there and it always would be. When it disappeared in one place, it turned up in another. Now it is scarce nearly everywhere. Over much of its former territory, it is commercially extinct.

During the last century, the cod's well-being was threatened more than once, but fishing boats then were smaller. They took fewer fish and left behind some that could breed. The factory ships at work today have sonar that enables their captains to track down congregations of fish. They can reach grounds that small boats couldn't, and haul bigger nets and reap heavier tows. They sweep the bottom as clean as a floor. "Those factory trawlers make one tow," Ames says, "and the crew can take a vacation for fifteen years, because nothing's coming back." Having stripped one ground, the ship moves to another. Entire populations of fish can be erased.

Fishermen tend to say that fish populations expand and contract cyclically. Ames says that this is true, but not in the sense they're describing. "What actually



ototype database for Atlantic cod from fishermen's knowledge." Photograph by James Nachtwey.

happens is a species recovers, fishermen discover the recovery, and flatten it," he says. "I did the same thing. I saw the runs, and I'd target them and watch them disappear, and I did what everyone else did. I went to the nearest location where I suspected there would be fish. I ended up in the Grand Manan Channel, on the boundary to Canada, past which you can't go."

Ames is sixty-seven, which is old for a fisherman. He is small and wiry, and he stoops a little. There is a gap between his two front teeth. He is black-haired, and he has a patchy beard that is partly gray. In the morning, from the patterns in his hair, you can see how his head lay on the pillow the night before. The back of his neck and his forehead are heavily lined. He speaks slowly but passionately, and he will not leave a subject until he is ready to. Stonington is at the foot of Deer Isle. The easiest way to get there is to fly to Bangor and drive an hour and a half south down Route 15, passing eventually over the Deer Isle Bridge, a tall, narrow, and elegant structure with a worn-out bed, which appears suddenly as the road emerges from woods. Ames and his wife, Robin Alden, and their thirteen-year-old daughter, Annie, occupy a large white house on a hill not far from the harbor. Ames fishes, for lobster, from June to November. After that he finds it too cold. "Your body can't take it," he says. "Especially as you get older, it's just plain painful." Also, fishing in the cold is more dangerous, and his wife has never liked his being out on the ocean alone.

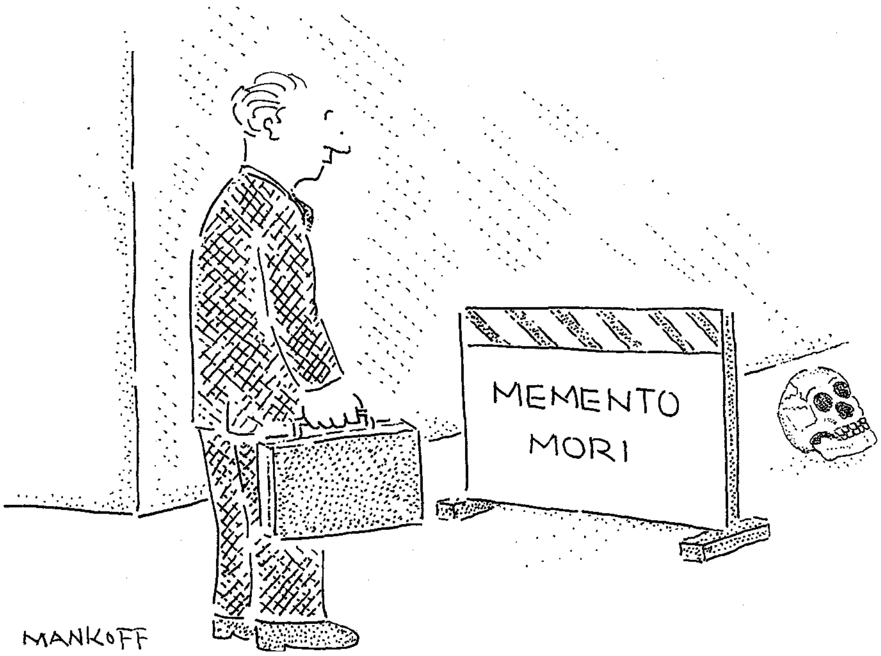
Ames is not a dilettante. He has fished and lobstered since childhood, and for much of his life he has relied on fishing to feed his family. He was also, however, trained as a scientist—he has a master's degree from the University of Maine, where he studied biochemistry, specifically tissue culture. He regards science and fishing as compatible pursuits. "The focus, the fixity of purpose, the discipline, the willingness to deal with the natural world and interpret what you're seeing are characteristic of both fields," he says. "Both are very pragmatic and both require that you be observant. Fishermen say, 'Can you read the bottom?' or 'Can you read what's in the net? Then you can fish.' It's better, of course, if you're a rugged person, and even better if you don't get seasick."

Last fall, Ames received a fellowship from the MacArthur Foundation, a "genius" grant. His novel accomplishment is to have identified lapsed spawning grounds and discrete populations of ancestral fish among an aggregation that had always been assumed to be monolithic, and therefore manageable, like a crop.

Fish scientists typically think that what fishermen know applies only to the behavior of fish on grounds the fishermen work and can't be applied to a species. Or they dismiss what fishermen tell them because it doesn't easily fit into the computer models the scientists rely on, or because they believe that in passing from one fisherman to another the accounts have been corrupted. According to Ames, the scientists say, "Colloquial reports aren't science. Our studies show there're plenty of fish, you're just a poor fisherman."

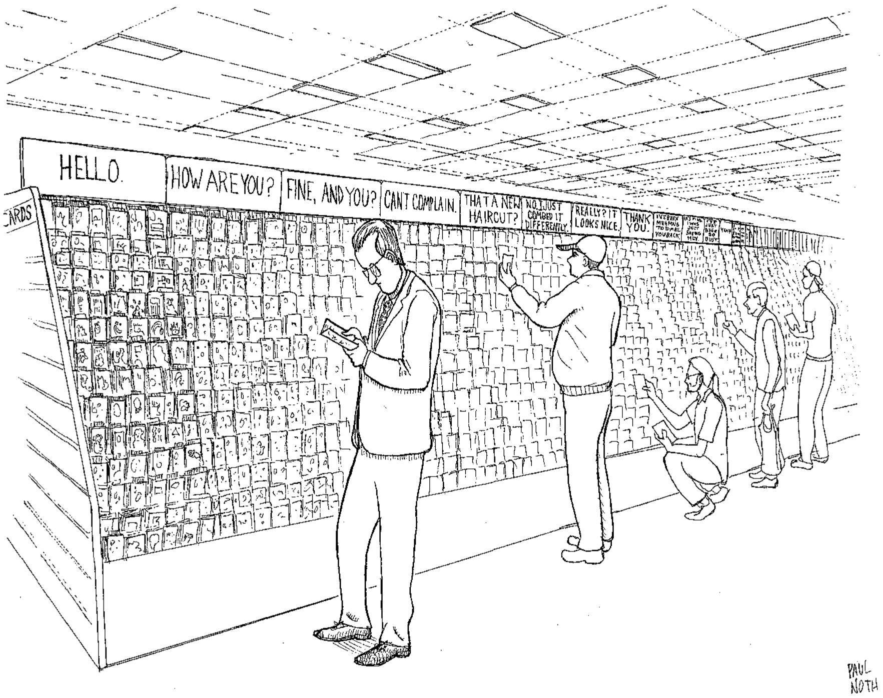
Fishermen are scornful of scientists. "A bunch of eggheads that don't know enough to tie their shoelaces, and ninety-nine per cent of them never saw salt water till they worked for the fisheries department" is a description I heard from a fisherman Ames knows. Fishermen avoid scientists because exchanges between them usually conclude with regulations that cost the fishermen money. Moreover, fishermen are secretive, especially older fishermen. A crop stays where you plant it. Cattle you can pen. Fish wander. Before sonar, fishermen survived by knowing things about fish that other fishermen didn't know. Lesser members of a fleet sometimes had no means of finding fish other than following the boats of fishermen who were good at it. When Ames felt that another captain was shadowing him, he would short-wire his gear, meaning lower his net only partway to the bottom. The other captain would see it come aboard empty and leave him alone. Conversation among fishermen is guarded. "Good fishermen talk in the oblique," Ames says. "If you get enough oblique reports, you can triangulate in on them, like navigation."

In 1994, Ames was a member of a state commission that considered raising cod in a hatchery. The commission determined that a hatchery cod would cost nearly as much as the fish would be worth at the market. They decided instead to release fingerlings in the original inshore spawning grounds. "The catch was we didn't know where the grounds were," Ames says. "They had been wiped out in the nineteen-twenties and thirties and forties." Nor had their locations ever been recorded. Ames and the fishermen of his generation could recall the offshore grounds of the fifties and sixties, because they had destroyed them. As Ames brooded on how to discover where the older grounds were, it occurred to him that



the fishermen of his father's and grandfather's times might know.

Ames says that his work has involved "building a prototype database for Atlantic cod from fishermen's knowledge." He tracked down thirty-two elderly fishermen and told them that he was trying to restore cod habitats. Lest they worry that they might be regarded as snitches by other fishermen, he promised to conceal their names. Eventually, he got answers from twenty-eight. "There's no fish anymore anyway," they said. "What difference does it make if we tell you what we know?"


CARDS
HELLO.
HOW ARE YOU?
FINE, AND YOU?
CAN'T COMPLAIN.
THAT A NEW HAIRCUT?
NO, I JUST COMBED IT DIFFERENTLY.
REALLY? IT LOOKS NICE.
THANK YOU.
I'VE BEEN MEANING TO E-MAIL YOU BACK.
IT'S FINE. I WAS JUST SAYING HEY.
I'VE JUST BEEN SO BUSY.
YEAH
PAUL NOTH

Most of the fishermen he visited at home. On the recordings of his interviews you can hear dogs barking, a radio playing, coffee cups clinking, a man knocking his pipe bowl against an ashtray. During one exchange, the voices recede, then disappear, and a door opens. The men return with wood for the fire they were sitting in front of. One of them says that the temperature has warmed to two below. "A regular heat wave," the other says.

"How many years did you fish?" Ames asked one of them.

"I don't know how many years," the man said. He sighed. "Forty-eight years, I guess, close to it. On the draggers, sardine boats, gillnetters." He said that he used to travel to high school in a boat. He laid down lines for flounder in the morning, then collected them on his way home.

The fishermen's descriptions of landmarks suggest a tribe of animists, as if their ancestors had named the coast and the ocean the way the Greeks named the sky. Ames asked one of them if he knew whether cod had spawned off Otter Island Reef or Saddleback Ledge.

"Years ago, they used to go all the way up in off the Brown Cow, and up toward Eagle Island there used to be a run of fish, but that's a long time before my time," the man said.

"Those were all cod?" Ames asked.

"I believe that was all cod," the man said. "They were on the east side of Vinalhaven. Stockton Springs, Turtle Head, Castine, that general area—supposedly, years and years ago that was a big spawning bed. The Gloucester fleet come down and broke the back on it. That was back when they had the sailing vessels, dory fishing. That's all hearsay. Late eighteen-hundreds, early nineteen-hundreds, when the big Gloucester fleets were sailing. Was in the spring sometime."

Ames said that in his childhood he had heard his grandfather mention that fleet. "He related that he counted well over a hundred sails north of Saddleback," he said. "This was back in the early nineteen-hundreds, somewheres between 1910 and 1925."

Several of the fishermen were disdainful of modern fishing. "What tickles me is that these fishermen today, if their radar goes out, their loran goes out, they can't fish," one of them said. "They're lost. We used to run off with just a watch and a compass, thick of fog, run off at night, set out trawls, hang a kerosene lantern on your flag. First-class equipment."

He and Ames discussed a few other matters. Then the fisherman said ruefully, "I often wish that what I had in my head I could give to my sons, but I can't. They have to learn it the same way I did."

Fishermen of the past paid close attention to the bottom, not only to find fish but also to avoid rocks and wrecks that might snag their nets. A snagged net was usually so torn up that it was useless. In addition, the tow was lost. The fishermen had an antipathy for dirty grounds.

"The only place I could drum up redfish out in that neck of the woods," Ames said of a piece of ground that he and a fisherman were discussing, "was where that barge went down with all the gas cannisters on it—a place they called the Beehive. You go down into that hard bottom between Skate Bank and Newfound. Right below that you drop into ninety-five fathom. Fairly hard bottom—it's either cobbled or sand. It looks hard on the machine—"

"Southern of it?" the fisherman asked.

"Pretty much southern."

"Off the eastern end of Skate Bank?"

"Yup."

"Slate rocks," the fisherman said decisively.

"Yup."

"That's what it is," the man said. "I had a shrimp net go lost down in there."

"You don't suppose you filled it with those gas cannisters?"

"No, the place is a mess," the man said contemptuously. "Slate rocks. Black rocks." He sounded as if he were shuddering.

Cod don't feed when they spawn.

Fishermen who had used longlines and hooks had caught cod where they were feeding. A territory where a fisherman using a trawl caught fish and one using hooks didn't was likely to be a spawning ground. If a fisherman described an area that appeared to be used for spawning, Ames verified that the area had a depth and a substrate that agreed with the cod's habits. He also required that any site be mentioned by at least two fishermen before he would accept it. The fishermen were familiar with large areas of the ocean. Their knowledge was specific. As the fishermen recounted their catches, Ames began seeing patterns of movement among the antique fish.

Ames grew up on Vinalhaven, an island visible from Stonington. His ancestors had been schoolteachers, farmers, fishermen farmers, and tradesmen on the island for hundreds of years. They arrived in 1758, from Marshfield, Massachusetts. A branch of the family later settled in Stonington. North of town is a pond called Ames Pond and a small cemetery where all the headstones have "Ames" engraved on them. One of Ames's grandfathers was a lighthouse keeper. Ames's father was captain of a trawler that fished the Grand Banks for rosefish, which is also called redfish or ocean perch. In the summer, he fished the ice fields off Labrador and Newfoundland. "In his dotage, he became a lobsterman," Ames says.

Throughout Ames's childhood, his ambition was to fish, but everyone told him that he was too small for it. He has a brother, John, a year and a half older, and a younger sister, Carrie. As a freshman in high school, Ames was four feet eleven inches tall and weighed ninety-five pounds. "I had a good attitude," he says, "but I was scrawny." John wasn't much taller, but he was broad-shouldered and muscular. "My grandfather used to shake his head and say, 'No, Ted, you're too small to fish. Your body will never stand up,'" Ames says. "It became the argument that took me away from the water."

Instead of following his brother into fishing, Ames joined the Navy. He repaired the radar on fighter jets. When his service ended, he went to Kansas City to study electronics, but after a year and a half he went back to Vinalhaven and became a fisherman anyway. Within a few years he had acquired a thirty-six-foot boat and two hundred and fifty lobster traps. "Everything was right side up," he says. "I owned my business completely, but everyone was still concerned that I wasn't rugged enough to do this long term." Ames had been a bright child. "People were always saying to me, 'Where did you learn that word?'" he says. His grandfather, observing that Ames was falling in love with a girl from the island, took him aside. He told Ames that if he stayed much longer on Vinalhaven he'd become "like a barnacle on a rock, because you'll be married and have children, and you'll lose the ability to shape your own life." What Ames needed to do, he said, was to go to school and learn a trade.

Ames sold his boat and his gear to his brother, on the condition that when he returned in the spring his brother would put the traps aside, and they'd groundfish together for cod, and for hake and haddock, which are related to cod. Ames enrolled at the University of Maine in Orono, near Bangor, when he was twenty-four. He studied so hard that he unintentionally memorized parts of the texts he was reading, which was no help when it came time to take his exams.

In 1965, after Ames's freshman year, he got married. He returned to Vinalhaven in the summer to fish with his brother. They would leave the harbor arguing about where to fish and argue until they reached a compromise. They were engaged in a lapsed form of fishing called tub trawling. In tub trawling, hooks are attached to a line that is several hundred feet long. The line is coiled in a tub. The setter, in the stern, drops the line overboard and, with a stick, flips the hooks and lines out as fast as he can manage.

Once Ames and his brother had their lines in the water, one of them would go forward and nap. The other would collect the trawl. Ames liked to use a lightweight twine for his trawls, on the theory that the fish couldn't see it as easily, so they took the hook more often. The disadvantage was that the line was elastic, and stretched when it held a heavy fish. The procedure for removing a trash fish involved holding the fish aloft, giving the line a quick shake, and jerking it just as it grew taut, which dislodged the hook. The line would slingshot past Ames's head. "Usually you wore a cap," Ames says, "or turned your head to the side as the hook went past, and it would miss you." Ames says that the second most painful thing that happened to him in his fishing career happened while he was shaking a barndoor skate off a hook. "I moved, but I guess I didn't move enough," he says. Like a missile, the hook embedded itself in his ear, leaving him attached to the hooks and fish that were still in the water. He stood, crouching, unable to move for the pain. "It hurt awfully," he told me. A wave or a gust might cause the line to grow suddenly taut, and he expected either to be pulled overboard or to have his ear torn. He began to shout for his brother, who appeared eventually and cut him loose.

During the spring of Ames's senior year, he and his wife had a son. The next year, Ames enrolled in graduate school. He received his master's degree, in biochemistry, in 1971. His thesis dealt with the isolation of a marine enzyme involved in the metabolism of sugars. He wanted to pursue a Ph.D., but his marriage had grown fragile, and he worried that continuing the near-monklike existence that he led while studying might undermine it completely. He and his wife had been happiest when he was fishing. He decided to find a teaching job in a harbor town, where he could get a boat and build up his gear and eventually fish again for his living. The job turned out to be on Mount Desert Island. One night, after he had been there a few months and had just closed a deal to buy four hundred lobster traps, he was driving home when he hit a patch of black ice and his car came to rest against a tree. "Broke my neck, crushed my shoulder, put a hole in my head, and broke some ribs," he says. He managed to make his way toward the lights of a house and knock on the door. He isn't sure that he didn't crawl there. When he came to in the hospital, the doctor told him that he would never walk again. A few days later, Ames told a neurosurgeon who had come to look in on him that he could feel his toe. The surgeon told him he had imagined it. "It happens," he said. Gradually, though, the feeling returned to Ames's limbs, and after two months he had learned to walk again. "I went around with this Frankenstein body for about a year," he says. "Then I had a neck collar to wear for even longer. I could still teach, but I couldn't fish."

Three years passed, and Ames bought himself a twenty-six-foot boat to lobster in as a pastime. A neighbor bought a boat and asked Ames if he would teach him how to gillnet. Ames said that he couldn't—he could no longer stand the labor, he said—but the man insisted, and Ames discovered that he was stronger than he thought. "That undid me," Ames says, "because while I enjoyed teaching, fishing was my obsession."

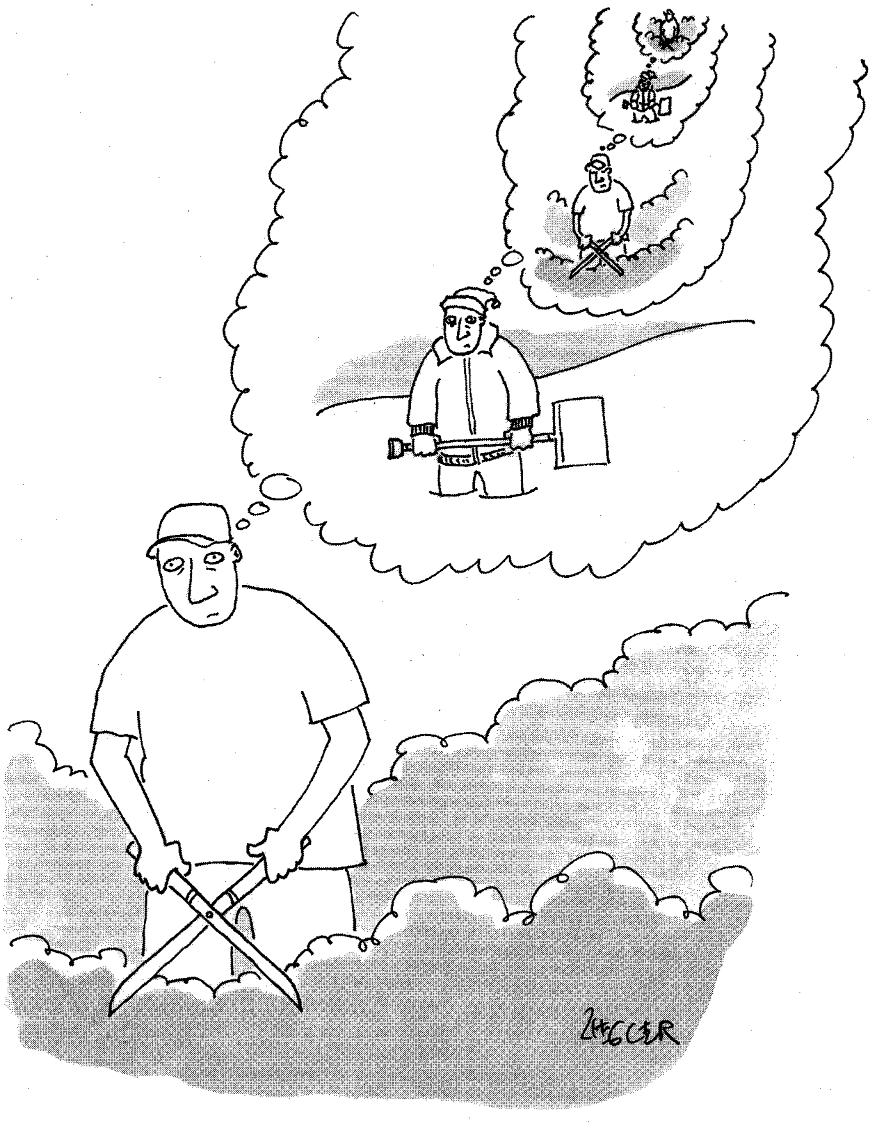
Ames fished for fifteen more years. He and his wife raised their son; then, in 1985, they divorced. Ames and Alden met through friends. She had grown up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and spent summers in Maine. In 1969, she had been a member of the first class of women at Yale, but left after two years to write for a newspaper in Stonington. She noticed that the paper covered the school board and the police and the church and the social news, but no one wrote about the fishermen. Eventually, she started a paper now called *Commercial Fisheries News*, which is still published in Stonington, although Alden is no longer involved with it. After Ames and Alden were married, Ames continued to fish, but in 1990 he hurt his back in a fall (the most painful thing that happened to him while fishing). He could have suffered and fished, but "groundfish stocks were very depleted, and it became hard to get good crews," he says. "I didn't mind fishing shorthanded, but Robin didn't like it. I was fishing offshore in my dragger in the wintertime. It seemed a good moment for me to come ashore."

Using the fishermen's testimony, Ames drew maps depicting the whereabouts of relic cod throughout the year. Then he drew arrows representing their movements from season to season. Eventually, he identified approximately six hundred square miles of former spawning grounds, up and down the coast. By comparing his maps with patterns of spawning during the seventies and eighties, he was able to tell that nearly half of the spawning grounds from the thirties were moribund.

By 2000, he had a map with a multitude of colored lines and arrows showing concentrations of cod. They seemed to travel along four particular corridors. He could follow a population through two and sometimes three stages of its migrations, but then he would lose them when they seemed to add themselves to other populations. The movements were sometimes toward spawning grounds and sometimes in pursuit of prey, mostly herring. Some populations clearly stayed close to their spawning grounds and some roamed far from them. The ones that stayed close appeared to form the populations that were originally fished and disappeared, but there was no way to be sure. "The only way to tell if a population is strictly local is to fish it down," Ames says. "If it disappears, it was probably local. If it returns, it probably wasn't."

Ames deduced that instead of one continuous population of cod that moved in a procession up and down the coast, there seemed to be several subpopulations; some of them moved north and south over considerable areas, and some travelled in circles within smaller areas. What he couldn't do was separate them from one another. All he could tell was that they were restless. "You're tracking things that you can't see, that are moving around in the past," he says. "You look for little clues, you make notes, but there's a lot of confusion."

In 2001, Ames read a paper by Joe Wroblewski, a fisheries biologist at Memorial University of Newfoundland, in St. John's. Wroblewski had discovered



IMAGINARY WEDDING SONG

You can never be a bride for more than a day
unless you are the bride of the Moose County Fair.
Or the bride of Sea Island. Or the bride of altitudes.
Or the bride of scrimmage. Or the bride of a miner's
lantern. The bride of eaves or the easy bride of naves.
The bride of the Second Avenue Glory Bound
Greater Covenant of Holiness in Christ Chapel
or bride of the Rock of Ages Full Gospel Sweet Home
House of Prayer. The bride of blistering scriptures.
The young bride of Dr. Roland Fumes, the pastor.
Or the bride of anchored earlobes and slapstick lipstick.
Bride of the affirmative girdle and transparent mantle.

You can never be a bride for more than a year
unless you are the bride of a flamboyant boy king,
princessed and pressed in something as white
as luxury. Or the bride of withering edicts.
Or the bride of John Shore's wind-up contraptions.
Or the bride of Abraham Jones, the butcher.

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that cod, like salmon, return to their natal spawning grounds. This meant that the arrows on Ames's charts could be drawn in discrete patterns. He had known where the fish bred and where they went, but he hadn't known that they returned to where they started. "Without a point of origin, I had a historical artifact that I couldn't prove one way or the other," he says. "Which meant that my work was worth squat. Knowing how the cod moved, it became possible to examine the behavior and stock patterns back in a time where cod and competing populations were robust, when the whole gulf was healthy. Not until then was it possible."

Ames's work allows scientists to reconstruct the gulf of the past. Robert Steneck, a professor at the University of Maine, whose specialty is marine biology, believes that the leap of imagination underlying it has its beginnings in Ames's childhood, when he heard the fishermen of his father's and grandfather's generations describing their grounds and catches. "What Ted was able to do is use his background in science to turn the oral history that he knew from his childhood into something valuable to the scientific community," Steneck says. "Everything he did, he did in a peer-reviewed, publishable way, and it was rigorous, but I bet you he knew the answer when he started."

Ames's ambition is not merely to restore the populations of cod; it is also to restore the vitality of the gulf, which he regards as a collection of species, divided into settlements, each dependent on its denizens' well-being. He sees as a prominent obstacle the methods of the government scientists who establish fish quotas. The federal government separates the oceans surrounding North America into eight regions, one of which is New England. Each spring and fall, government scientists throw nets into the ocean in close to three hundred places that they select at random between Cape Hatteras and Nova Scotia, and note how many fish the nets bring up and what kind they are. They also collect reports from observers on boats and on shore. Then they estimate how many tons of those fish the waters contain. Each region determines how many fish it would be prudent to remove. An economist at the University of Maine named Jim Wilson was a member, from 1977 until 1991, of a committee that advised the New England Fishery Management Council, the group that sets quotas in New England. He has described this process as "scientific hubris," partly because, as he says, "it's very, very imprecise. The people in the business of doing this kind of sampling say there is a thirty-to-fifty-per-cent error point." Also, he says, because "the fish are not distributed evenly in a homogeneous fluid. They're patchy, and the patches get smaller as your stocks decline."

The government position, according to Ames, assumes that all fishing grounds are alike. He believes it does not adequately protect spawning areas and nursery grounds—the places where young-of-the-year fish take shelter. It doesn't allow for the fish's gathering in order to migrate, and their vulnerability on such occasions. It takes no account of the interdependence of species. It treats an increase in the numbers of herring, say, as an opportunity to take more of them, when the increase might represent the stock on which a more desirable species—cod, for example—might feed the following year. If the herring are gone, the cod, trying to recover, might fail to thrive.

The Atlantic, Steneck says, is the youngest ocean, and it has fewer species than other oceans. This is because the North Atlantic, especially, has been subject to freezing more often during ice ages than other oceans have. In the tropics there tends to be a diversity of fish. The farther north one goes, the more invertebrates, such as lobsters and urchins and crabs, predominate, probably because of overfishing. A predatory hierarchy that has a number of species at all levels is called a food web. The food web in the North Atlantic is so meagre that it more nearly resembles a food chain. Until about a hundred years ago, in the Gulf of Maine, the apex predator was cod. They sometimes grew to six feet and weighed two hundred pounds. The remains of cod in Indian middens are those of fish that were three feet long. The largest cod caught today are typically two feet long.

Entering a wilderness, Steneck says, we tend to think that the way it looks is probably how it has always looked. Close to the coast, much of the floor of the Gulf of Maine is a kelp forest. The rest is covered by shaggy red algae that look like carpeting. Twenty years ago, sea urchins denuded the place. Since then, the urchins have been hunted so avidly for the Japanese market that the fishery has collapsed. Steneck has been diving in the Gulf of Maine for thirty years. "If you dive now, and you have

The bride of Delfeyo Nkrumah and his handsome
handmade spears. Or the bride of Yukio Imaura
and the fish. The bride of James James, Jr.,
the eponymous. Or the bride of Wole Curtis, the soothsayer.
The bride a mile from the graveyard and the warmth
of good money. The bride of birthright hugging the finger.

You can never be a bride forever unless you are the bride
having control over death. Or the bride of the very last number.
The bride of Communion on a sliver of tongue or the bride
of crucifixion on a slithery strap. The briefly new bride.
The bride of confections and sand in the mouth
of each pearl-studded slipper and sand in the mouth, too,
lodged and gristling behind each rice-colored tooth.
The bride of vows that cannot be chewed.
The bride of falling water. The bride of spit in the sink
and spit on the mirror. A spoon brooding in the brew bride,
an onion stewing in the stew. The bored and tarnished bride
of a corset undone by what's due and what "I do" makes you.

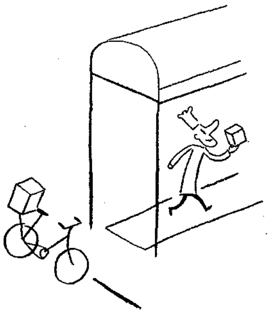
—*Terrance Hayes*

that century-long vision, what you're struck by is that the forest hasn't changed, because our best guess is that when cod were abundant they were eating all the urchins, and there were kelp forests everywhere," Steneck says. "What you're looking at today, though, is kelp in otherwise empty forests. You start to realize what's missing, and you get a chill. The contribution Ted Ames has made is to have stretched the horizon and let us know what was there in the near past. Until you can see what was there then, you can't know where to go in the future."

Like many of the lobster boats in the Stonington fleet, Ames's boat, the Mary Elizabeth, is white with green trim and a cabin. It is a skeg-style boat—that is, it has a keel. Mary and Elizabeth were names of women in the family of the man who sold it to him. Ames believes that every fisherman has a method or a species he is good at and some he never masters. He was best at groundfishing, he says. "I was mediocre at shrimping, so-so at scalloping, and good at lobster."

When I went out with him one day last fall, it took us about ten minutes to reach the first of his traps. Traps are attached to a line of rope held to the surface by a buoy; the arrangement is called a string. When Ames drops a string, he enters its location on a computer. The traps and the route among them show up on the screen in a curving purple line, like a kite tail. "You can see how powerful the technology is," he said. "You don't need a plan anymore. You just need to be able to play a computer game." He collected the string with a gaff. Then he wrapped it around the rim of a turning wheel the size of a hubcap which was mounted on the cabin wall. The wheel was attached to a winch. Most lobstermen raise the trap quickly, which leaves rope piled at their feet. Ames has learned that if he raises the trap slowly, the line comes off the wheel in a neat circle.

Possibly because of the demise of cod, which fed on them, lobsters are more densely congregated in the Gulf of Maine than they are anywhere else in the world. In places, there are two of them for each square metre of ground; four would fit on the surface of a desk. Another reason for their numbers is that the fishery engages in stringent practices to protect itself. The state requires a fisherman to buy a gauge to measure a lobster's carapace. Lobsters that are too small must be thrown back, and any large enough to be dependable breeders must be thrown back, too. Any female carrying eggs must be returned. Before dropping her overboard, lobstermen cut a small V-shaped notch in one of her fantails. Any notched female, with or without eggs, must be thrown back. Lobstermen often return as many lobsters as they keep. Ames thinks that the reason they are so conscientious is that many of them have come to lobstering from collapsed fisheries. Lobster is the last healthy one left, and everyone agrees on the need to preserve it.



Lobsters walk toward the shore in summer and toward deeper water in the fall (they can't swim). A lobsterman places his traps in their paths. Ames will not discuss how he decides where to leave a trap. Once when I asked he said, "If you put a fox in a chicken house in the dark, don't you think he'd find chickens?" Another time, on his boat, he looked at me for so long before he answered that I realized I shouldn't have asked again. "It's not a really difficult process for an experienced fisherman to figure out where to catch lobster," he said, finally. "When someone like you looks at the bay, you see the top of the water. When I look, I see the bottom, too." He thrust his chin forward briefly. "I know this is shoal here, there's sandy bottom over there, and rocks and a ledge there. That's your stock-in-trade. You have knowledge that land people don't have, and you're attuned to finding things."

Lobstermen informally divide the ocean among the towns and precincts whose shores it borders. A lobsterman from one town who drops his traps in another town's waters can expect to find his strings cut and his traps disappeared. Ames avoids these areas. A trap costs about a hundred dollars, and he loses ten per cent of them a year to yachts and barges and ships that run over the lines and cut them. By Maine law, a lobsterman can fish eight hundred traps. Ames puts out about five hundred, partly because he is fishing by himself.

Ames had been so occupied with other matters, among them answering phone calls from people who wanted to talk about his MacArthur award, that he hadn't visited his traps for three weeks. Usually he visits them twice a week. Likely the bait had been used up some time ago, so he expected most of the traps to be empty. He balanced each of them on the gunwale and bent over it like a man unpacking a trunk. The first traps he pulled had one or two lobsters each and two kinds of crabs, sand crabs and stone crabs. The crabs he threw back, but from the stone crabs he removed the claws. They are sold in the market as Florida crab claws; the crab eventually grows them again. The majority of lobsters were close enough to legal size that he pulled the gauge from his pocket and measured them. Several had notches in their tails, and several were too small.

Ames had decided to quit fishing for the year, so he began stacking the traps in the stern. His traps weigh about forty pounds. As the stack grew higher, he would wince with the effort of lifting them above his shoulders. After an hour or so, Ames pointed at a boat closer to the horizon. "That's a nephew of mine," he said. "Some people have a talent for catching things and some don't, and he does, so he's a joy to watch." The head of a seal appeared off the bow. Seals follow the lobster boats. When a captain throws a lobster back, the seals often chase it down and eat it. The first two sets of lines Ames collected had about two pounds of lobsters in each trap. The fleet average was a pound and a half. The traps in the third set were mostly empty. "This is more like I thought it would be," he said. From one of the traps he removed the white spine of a fish. "Looks like a flounder made a mistake," he said. In a few traps were more claws than lobster. The lobsters lose the claws in fights.

Ames wore waterproof overalls that were yellow in back and orange in front. He had on a blue slicker and a green cap that said "Dad" over the bill. Pointing at another boat, Ames said, "That's my brother John. He stove up his back the first of the season, and he's been struggling with it ever since." Around eleven-thirty, we stopped and ate sandwiches. When another lobster boat seemed to be bearing down on us, Ames jumped up and put his boat in gear and moved off a hundred yards or so. With a pair of pliers that looked like a hole punch, he spread rubber bands and fastened them on the lobsters' claws, and put the lobsters in a cooler filled with seawater.

"Here are your choices. You can plead guilty."

By the end of the morning, Ames had collected as many traps as he felt able to and had built a wall of them taller than he was. "This was all much easier when you're young," he said. "What was a pleasure before, now you just get beat up."

On our way back to the harbor, we pulled alongside his brother's boat, the Elva G., and Ames tried reaching him on the radio. "Elva G., come in, John. Elva G., come in." He turned to me. "That's the name of his wife," he said. "Widow now. Rather, he's a widower. She died a few years ago." He called again on the radio. We could see him working on his deck. "He was one-ninety when we were kids," Ames said. "Heavier framed. He's so hard of hearing it's a joke." He didn't seem to hear us approach. Beneath his stern was a line of buoys belonging to a fisherman they knew named Robert. Ames called out, "Are you afoul of Robert?" His brother held his hand to his ear and shouted, "What?"

"Robert's under your stern!" Ames shouted. His brother shook his head, and said that it was his last string of the day. Ames waved, and backed away and pointed the boat toward the harbor. "Off to the races we go," he said, gunning the throttle. On the way, he washed down the deck with a scrub brush, pouring dishwashing soap onto the bristles. He said that it's much easier to wash down the boat while on the water, before everything dries. He rinsed the deck and the gunwales with a hose that drew water from a reservoir heated by the engine. To make the water flow toward the stern, he ran the boat faster.

Lobsters, it turns out, are not easily trapped. No one knew this until recently. Lobster traps are built from wire coated in vinyl. Typically, they are three feet long, two feet wide, and a foot and a half tall. Each trap is divided into compartments called the kitchen and the parlor; all have one kitchen, some have two parlors. On either side of the trap is an entrance to a passageway in the shape of a funnel, made from twine that has been woven into netting. Each funnel leads to the kitchen, where the bait is. The interior end of the funnel is usually held open by a wire hoop, the size of which varies according to the fisherman's preferences. A hoop that is too wide allows young seals to stick their heads in the kitchen and steal the bait. From the kitchen a funnel leads to the parlor, where a slot allows immature lobsters to escape. Lobstermen used to think that the traps held the rest of the lobsters prisoner. Between 1998 and 2000, a professor of zoology at the University of New Hampshire named Winsor H. Watson III filmed lobsters in traps. Watson observed crowds of lobsters around the traps, which was unexpected. Scientists and lobstermen had assumed that a solitary lobster approached a trap, entered, and was captured. Watson said that, instead, the activity around the trap was like that around an anthill. Closest to the traps were lobsters who appeared to be keeping others from entering. Three of Watson's videos are displayed on the university's Web site. Beneath them are the captions "Video of lobster escaping from kitchen," "Video of larger lobster chasing away smaller lobsters entering the trap and chasing a smaller lobster out of the trap" (which is my favorite), and "Video of a lobster in the kitchen preventing others from entering." Only six per cent of the lobsters that entered the trap were caught. Seventy-two per cent of the ones who escaped left through the funnel in the kitchen, and twenty-eight per cent walked through the escape vent in the parlor. The lobsters' behavior suggested that, instead of being a means of catching lobsters, the traps were a source of food for them.

Ames likes to sit in one of the booths at the Harbor Café on Main Street in Stonington. The wooden benches are just the right length for him to turn sideways and stretch out his legs. The windows look out on the harbor, past buildings that have their fronts on the street and their backs on pilings. The tide goes in and out beneath them. Late on the day after he had hauled his traps, I sat with him drinking coffee. He had planned that morning to retrieve the rest of them, but the work the day before had worn him out. The lids of his eyes seemed to want to close.

I asked what he thought the gulf's future is if nothing is done to preserve it. "Slime eels and worms," he said. Then he seemed to reconsider. "The thing that the Gulf of Maine really has to impress on you is that it is part of a very dynamic process that is constantly changing," he said, "so you can never put your finger on it and say, 'This is the way it is.' We've been missing a dozen species that I know of. Systemwide estimates, what the government does now, don't touch the complexity of the devastation of having a truncated population structure, of having fish caught before they can breed. The Gulf of Maine is a collection of populations, and they all need protection. When I returned to fishing from science, I had a different set of eyes to look at this complicated world I had enjoyed fishing in. When the opportunity to study cod surfaced, it was natural to say, 'What about?' and 'What if?'"

The waitress poured us more coffee. "Lobster is a good example of what can happen with a fishery if you take proper care of it," Ames said. "By governing the way lobster is caught—no nets, no diving—you are using the most benign methods. The trap goes up and down, it isn't dragged, it doesn't destroy the nursery ground. You are protecting brood stock, and you're protecting juveniles. You end up with a species managed by sound criteria and protected from bottlenecks in its life cycle. If you develop a similar strategy for other species, they could thrive, too. When the gulf was healthy, nothing worked very hard to get a full meal, and you could make it that way again, and you have to. Because there isn't a fishing stock in the world that can't be wiped out if it's targeted by an industrial fleet. There are places where you need big boats. If you take a seventy-five-foot boat offshore to Georges Bank and try to fish, you are sticking your head in a noose. When you have storms, as those swells with a long stretch ground out on the edge of the bank, they make enormous waves, and if your boat can't sit in an eighty- or hundred-foot wave without pitchpoling you're going to die. And if you can't stand the white water that settles on top of the bank after they break you're also going to die. You need an eighty- or ninety-foot boat on Georges Bank, but not in the Gulf of Maine. If you allow into the nursery grounds a vessel that can harvest a million pounds a day, you're going to destroy the resource. It can't recover if it's gone. That's what my work is showing."

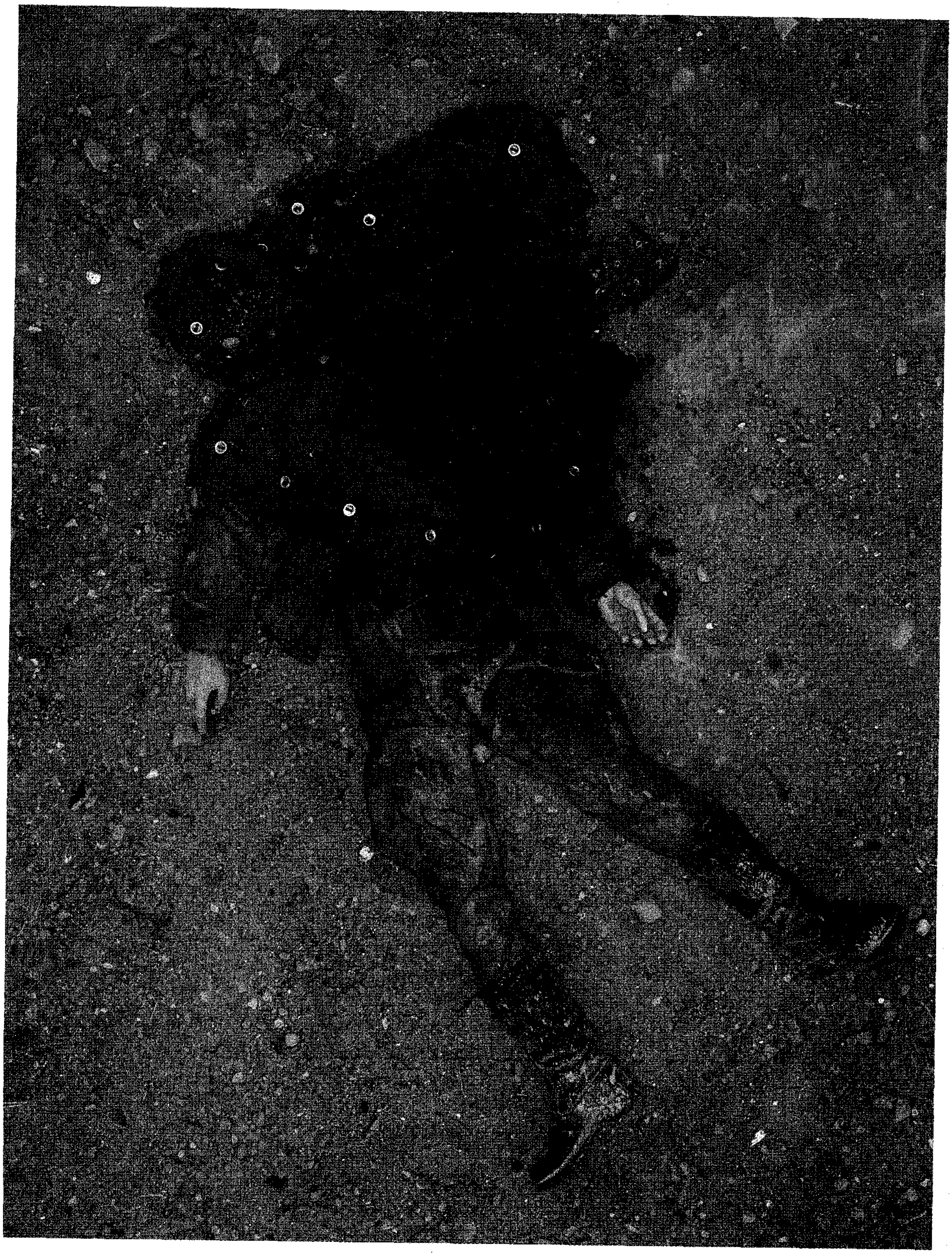
Ames looked at his watch and said it was time to help his daughter with her homework. He rubbed his eyes. Then he shrugged. "It's nothing to me," he said of the fishery. "I'm in my dotage. Most fishermen my age, the back's gone, ball joints and hips are gone, feet are gone, too. I'm not there yet, but I would be in a year or two. Bad hearing's another infirmity, because you're around diesels all the time. Occupational hazard. The important thing is fishing's always been an owner-operated industry—a self-made, independent survivor of a Colonial-age life style—and it's being lost because of the management structure that is so opposed to the participants. Fishing is an American icon. Four thousand families around here rely on lobster for their living, and if you add sternmen that's probably six thousand. If there's a hiccup in the fishery, there's going to be a lot of families on hard times because they can't make their note. There's logging inland and there's potato farming, but lobstering is everything on the coast. A boy can still grow up here and be poor and build himself traps and enter this profitable fishery and use it efficiently. But the seasonal round I knew as a child—cod, hake, haddock, halibut, shrimp, shark, scallop—they're gone."

The waitress brought our check. "Aquaculture—fish farms and hatcheries—costs billions of dollars," Ames said. "The ocean is free. All you have to do is let the fish breed and keep the fishing boats out of the nursery." He waved his hand toward the gulf. "It's there year after year, as long as you take care of it." ♦

FICTION

FIRST DEFEAT (1939)

BY ALBERTO MÉNDEZ



We now know that Captain Alegría chose his death blindly, without having met the ruthless gaze of the future which greets those who do not live by the rules. He chose to fade away discreetly, without fuss, and never raised his voice again after having made his way across the front line toward his disbelieving enemy, holding his hands in the air, but not so high as to seem imploring, and shouting repeatedly, "I have surrendered."

Madrid was bathed in tepid air, as transparent as perfume. The melancholy quiet of the night was broken only by the muffled explosions of shells falling on the city in a cadence that was more liturgical than belligerent. *I have surrendered.* Captain Alegría had no doubt spent two or three nights rehearsing this moment. In all likelihood, he purposefully chose not to say "I surrender," because that announcement would have indicated a decision made on the spot, when in fact he had been surrendering little by little for months. He had surrendered before handing himself over to the enemy. Later, when the time came to talk about it, he would describe his act as a kind of victory in reverse. In January, 1938, he concluded a letter to his fiancée, Inés, as follows: "All wars cost human lives, of course, but this war has become a form of usury. We will have to choose between winning the war and conquering a cemetery." We now know that he had, unwittingly, rejected both options in advance.

Given what we know about Carlos Alegría, it is safe to assume that all he heard as he crossed from one trench to the other was the din of his own panic. All the noises, the explosions, the cries around him were absorbed into the silence of the night. Madrid stood behind him like a stage set, the skyline of the darkened city reluctantly silhouetted by the moon, rising jaggedly into the warm air. Madrid was holding its breath.

So began the defeat of Captain Alegría. For three long years he had been observing his tattered enemies, his countrymen, as they resigned themselves to the fact that another army—General Franco's, and his own—was annihilating that immobile city, its limits arbitrarily defined by trenches from which everyone had long since given up expecting an attack.

PAOLO VENTURA (2006)

Two months before surrendering to the enemy, Alegría wrote to his professor of natural law in Salamanca, "Violence and pain, rage and weakness eventually blend into a religion of survival, a ritual of hope, in which killer and killed, victim and executioner intone the same psalm; already we speak only the language of the sword or the language of the wound."

He'd had three years of service in the Quartermaster Corps, performing his duties with the maniacal rigor of a surveyor and the stubbornness of an only child, making sure that no ammunition was obtained without due permission and that no soldier was deprived of the rations he needed in order to go on fighting—three years of inspecting the defeat of the enemy, through the green-tinted binoculars issued by the quartermaster's store to official strategists, military observers, and morbid onlookers. The horrors that Alegría could not see for himself he heard about.

From his parapet he watched the enemy come and go, from the office to the front, from the front to the workshop, from army to family, from routine to death. At first these men seemed to him to lack the soul of an army, and thus to deserve to be conquered. But over time he came to the conclusion that they were, as he wrote in letters, a civil army, "which is to say, a creature as improbable as subterranean birds or angelic vermin." Finally, watching those soldiers wage war as one might help a neighbor or a sick relative, he became convinced that they had been born for defeat; he began to see them as so many walking corpses.

Captain Alegría's own first brush with physical danger occurred on the day this story began. He had decided not to change sides but to surrender, to give himself up as a prisoner of war. The deserter who joins the other army ceases to be its enemy; the prisoner of war is an enemy defeated, but an enemy still. When he was later accused of treason, Alegría insisted on this distinction.

I have surrendered. The typesetter armed with a rifle who took charge of this rebel army captain, shifting a stake to let him through the barbed wire, probably had no idea that he was unleashing a new chaos that had only a tangential connection to the greater chaos of the war. No one fired. When Alegría came to the lip of a Republican trench, several frightened men in civilian clothes threatened him with their guns. He was ordered to jump down into the trench, and did so. In the darkness someone removed the pistol from his belt. He offered no resistance. The pistol was clean and shiny; the safety catch was on. It had never fired a shot. Had he disposed of it, Captain Alegría would have been in breach of the directives. He was surrendering, true, but with his kit intact.

There was nothing fierce or military about his appearance. He looked like a law clerk disguised as a soldier: round glasses in the middle of a round, chubby face, which was perched on a body that would have seemed tiny if it weren't for his peaked cap. All the witness accounts that we have been able to gather mention a certain remoteness in his bearing, despite his compliance. He obeyed all orders as if he had anticipated the sequence in which they would be given.

First, he knelt with his hands behind his neck; then he lay face down with his hands behind his neck. After that, he had to walk, with his hands behind his neck, through a labyrinth of trenches from which ragged men peered at a dim horizon, and, finally, with his hands behind his neck, he came to a clearing in a wood, where a man in a greatcoat inspected him from head to toe by the light of a carbide lamp. All the other orders had been whispered by his captors, but this unhinged officer bellowed at him, demanding to know what the hell he was doing there.

Alegría's reply, by contrast, was calm and quiet: "The Committee for the Defense of Madrid is going to surrender to Franco tomorrow or the day after."

"So that's why you're surrendering to us? Come off it."

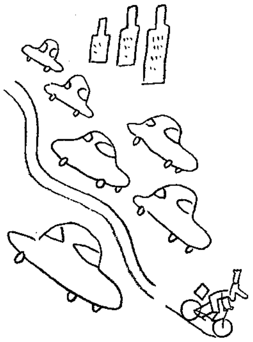
"That's why."

This sent a ripple of whispers through the group of plain-clothed soldiers, but all that reached him were their curious looks and condescending smiles. They took him for a madman.

Alegría would have liked to explain why he was abandoning the army that was going to win the war, why he was surrendering to the defeated, why he didn't want to take part in the victory. But, discouraged by the coarseness of his captors, he opted for silence again.

What value could the lives of those dishevelled men possibly add to the spoils of war? Didn't they realize that they were going to die for the sake of usury?

He was led on foot through the pine plantations of La Dehesa de la Villa to the Calle Francos Rodríguez, where he and his two armed guards waited for a truck that had been distributing ammunition on the northwest front of Madrid. It was almost three in the morning when the truck arrived. He was propped on some sacks in the back, and off they went. He was now a prisoner.



At the corner of Bravo Murillo and Alvarado, a group of men stopped the truck. There was a wounded man with them, whom they lifted up and laid beside Captain Alegría. A bullet had smashed the man's right shoulder and his makeshift dressing could not stop the flow of blood. He was moaning softly, as if trying not to bother anyone or draw attention to himself. We know from his testimony that Alegría tried to help stanch his bleeding.

When he saw the prisoner, the wounded man asked, "What's he doing here?"

"He's a deserter," one of the soldiers said.

"I have surrendered," Alegría corrected him.

"Shoot him," the wounded man suggested laconically.

"Tomorrow or the day after, Segismundo Casado is going to surrender," Alegría explained.

"Uh-huh. And that's why you surrendered? Come off it."

The truck stopped in front of Cuatro Caminos General Hospital. Two soldiers, in full uniform, came to help lift the wounded man down, and one of them, noticing Alegría's uniform, asked, "What's with him?"

"He's a deserter."

Silence.

No one paid any more attention to him. The wounded man's grimaces, his bleeding shoulder, the darkness, and the noise of the truck precluded further explanations. The rickety truck lurched back into gear and made its rickety way toward military headquarters. Madrid was blacked out but not empty. Though it was after three in the morning, many people were out on the streets. The numbers increased toward the city center; the Puerta del Sol was positively swarming with soldiers and civilians, quietly coming and going.

The truck drove up the Calle Mayor and didn't stop until it was inside military headquarters. All the men there were in uniform; they saluted their superiors according to protocol, and everyone's rank was indicated by regulation insignia. Being back among professional soldiers was reassuring for Captain Alegría. For him, military rules, regardless of loyalties, were like a map: everything was precisely located and all the distances defined.

That courtyard must have seemed like a cloister to him, despite the feverish activity and commotion so unsuited to the place. One of his guards approached an officer; the two men discussed the prisoner, but Alegría could not hear what was said. No one was watching him and no one noticed his incongruous uniform, although the place was well lit, as it had to be, with so much going on. He was not under restraint or observation, neither feared nor hated. It was true that Casado was going to surrender. Another truck, slightly more presentable than the one in which Alegría had been transported, was being loaded haphazardly with an endless stream of files, folders, documents, and loose papers, which soldiers were stamping down, so as to fit in as much as possible. Other documents were being fed to a crackling fire at the center of the courtyard.

Alegría remained where he was for some time, standing at ease, observing the frenzied activity of soldiers and officers, who ignored his presence, until two armed men marched him away.

They took him down into a basement that smelled of latrines and locked him in a spacious cell, which was already occupied by another prisoner. Only when his eyes had adjusted to the dim light could Alegría see that the prisoner was wearing a Republican uniform with the stripes of a first corporal. He was a scrawny man, and immediately struck Alegría as untidy. Although of inferior rank, he observed the Captain impudently, but since discipline was hardly the order of the day Alegría simply said, "Good morning," in as civil a manner as possible.

Day was breaking.

What is a man who has lost to the losers?

From the corporal's testimony, we know that he asked Alegría for tobacco to roll a cigarette, and, discovering that the newcomer didn't smoke, lapsed into surly indifference.

Captain Alegría looked for a place to settle, as far away as possible from his cellmate, and slumped down in a dark corner where the light that was already creeping in through the basement windows could not reach him. No doubt events were unfolding more or less as he had anticipated, but something base was distorting and cheapening them, reducing his surrender, which he had imagined as rich in moral subtlety and nuance, to its meanest interpretation.

These speculations about our hero's thoughts are simply our way of explaining the events we know to have occurred. We know that Alegría studied law, first in Madrid and then in Salamanca. We know from his relatives that he received a country gentleman's education in Huérmeces, in the province of Burgos, where he was born, in 1912, to an aristocratic family of old Castilian stock, and reared in a rambling house with two stone archways and a coat of arms that distinguished its inhabitants from the local parvenus who owed their fortunes to famines in the south, where livestock, vines, corn, and olives had succumbed to anthrax, phylloxera, weevils, oidium, and other curses.

He was an unremarkable but conscientious student. In Madrid, Jiménez de Asúa taught him that the law has nothing to do with nature, and that the only way for a legislator to defend an egalitarian society is to take sides, since the powerful already have the advantage of power. But later, in Salamanca, he learned that the law, which exists over and above particular laws, is impartial.

There was even some mention of divine right.

When he was still a downy-cheeked boy, he embarked on his solemn and formal courtship of Inés Hoyuelos, the only child of a wealthy grocer. We know for certain that he joined Franco's insurgents, in 1936, in order to defend what was his by right. At first, his superior officers were uncertain how to employ him; this provisional second lieutenant didn't strike them as suited for active combat. Finally, they assigned him to the Quartermaster Corps, where, they imagined, his rectitude and his experience would be more useful than on the battlefield. We know, however, from remarks that he made to his brothers-in-arms, that a deep-seated weariness and the subsequent succession of deaths transformed him, in his own words, into a creature of pure routine. Nevertheless, toward the end of 1938, he was promoted to the rank of captain, in recognition of his conscientiousness.

For Alegría, it was a war without battles, without heroic deeds or enmity, a war spent stocking bushels of wheat, pounds of tobacco, and articles of clothing, counting cartridge belts, checking the state of the kits, distributing ammunition, blankets, boots, and underwear for the soldiers. His war was a matter of loading, organizing, doling out, and administrating all that was required in order for others to kill, die, and vanquish enemies that he had never seen at close range, although they were always there, like a landscape, becoming more and more static, turning to stone.

The last quartermaster report, which he wrote, in fulfillment of his obligations, the night he surrendered, indicates his state of mind after three years of war: "Having taken stock, I confirm that everything tallies satisfactorily with the attached record sheets, with the sole exception of the undersigned officer, who regards himself as a square circle, a metallic spirit, and who, while detesting our enemies, does not want to feel responsible for their defeat. Carlos Alegría. Captain, Quartermaster Corps."

More than an hour went by before a clamor of engines sounded outside. "They've surrendered, haven't they?" the corporal asked.

The building was being abandoned. No one was giving orders; everyone knew what he had to do—get away as quickly as possible. The echoes of frenetic activity gradually faded, as had Alegría's grand plan, and by ten in the morning—he checked the time on the Roskopf watch that had belonged to his grandfather—they had dissolved into silence. He and the scrawny corporal were alone, the only occupants of the military headquarters.

Franco was taking control of Madrid. An hour or two later, the new occupants of the city arrived and set about gaining possession, in a noisy but orderly manner, of every office, hallway, and stone-floored corridor. The temple of command was now theirs.

There was a martial sound to their footsteps—the rhythm of power and obedience, submission and hierarchy. For Captain Alegría, these were deeply familiar sounds, the voice of all that was his. But this recognition brought him no solace. Quite the opposite. It was like returning to a world he had disowned, a world he had fled; it was like starting all over again.

The noise of locks and bolts and general bustling about brought him back from the refuge of his memory. The door to his cell opened, and a colonel escorted by three soldiers was surprised to discover that the building was not completely abandoned.

"You two, what are you doing here?" we assume he asked, and, although our witness, the scrawny corporal, seemed to be downplaying a certain docility on his part ("The war had gone on so long, I wasn't on either side anymore," he told us), he did remember our hero stressing the fact that he had surrendered.

"Whom did you surrender to, Captain?"

"To the Republican Army."

"When?"

"This morning, sir."

The colonel looked to his men for confirmation that he had heard correctly. The men remained perfectly still and expressionless. In the army, it is up to the commanding officer to deal with unexpected situations.

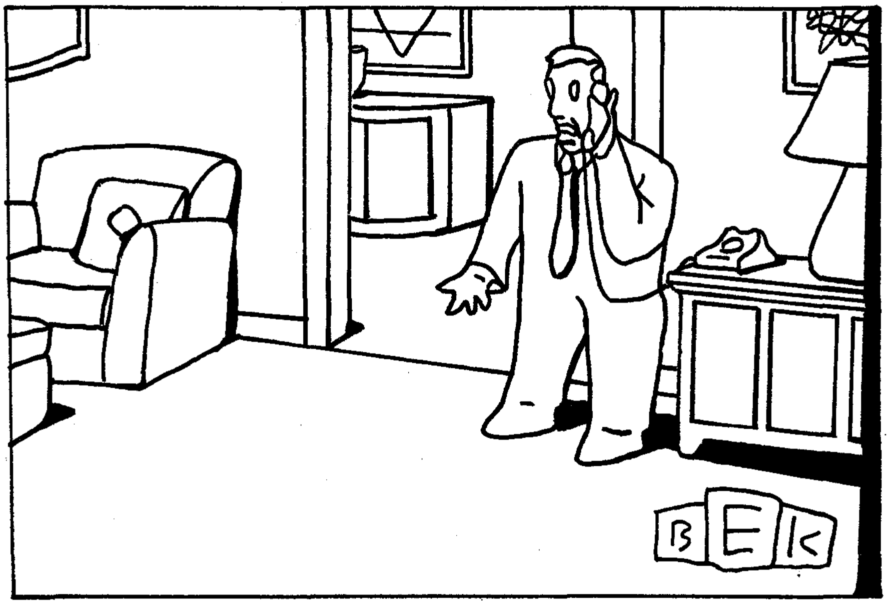
He asked for Alegría's military I.D. and glanced at it with incredulity, as if scanning the document for some kind of explanation. Then he put it in his breast pocket, and, more stupefied than angry, asked, "Did you really surrender this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

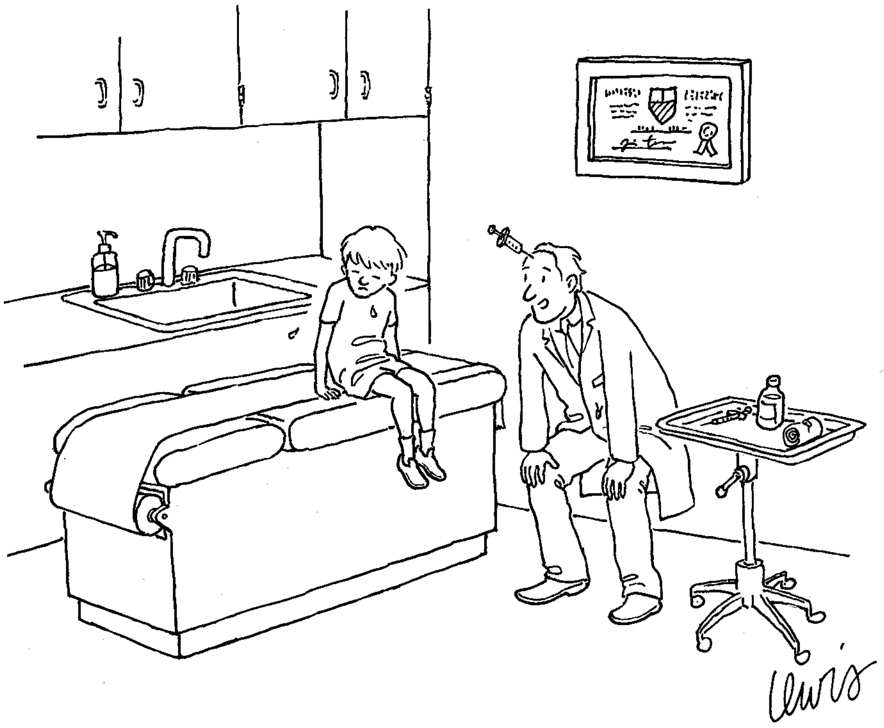
"You're a fool and a traitor. You'll be court-martialled for this."

The colonel and his men went out and locked the door, leaving the prisoners where they had found them. The corporal didn't dare take his eyes off the ground. He knew that being a prisoner could be his salvation, and so it was.

Time passed slowly, strewn with silences, but soon new prisoners began to



"I'm not trying to say anything—I'm just talking."



"If it were painful, could I do this?"

arrive in a steady flow, like water from a spring.

Captain Alegría took stock of the vanquished, as they were delivered to the basement of military headquarters, until he recognized one of them: the man who had accompanied him that morning from La Dehesa de la Villa to Cuatro Caminos General Hospital. His bandaged shoulder, his arm hanging limp, and the expression of desperate pain on his face were the only familiar sights among those penned shadows. Alegría made his way across to him and asked if he was in pain. As soon as the words had left his mouth he was likely overcome by adolescent embarrassment. A bullet-ridden shoulder and defeat: how could he not be in pain?

"Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Christ! It's the guy who surrendered!"

That spontaneous recognition of his status must have given Alegría a certain satisfaction, because, according to the wounded man, who survived only because his arm was being amputated on the day when he would otherwise have been condemned to death, Alegría simply said thank you and turned aside, staring off into space. He was at last what he had chosen to become: his own enemy.

Prisoners continued to pour into that basement, each adding something new to the sum of shock, fear, and resignation. When, after three days, it became impossible to breathe, some of the men were moved out.

We have only sketchy information on what happened to Alegría between the basement and the firing squad. All we have to go on are documents filed by the guards and the few letters he wrote; beyond them lies the truth. Alegría could have spoken of his experience—he certainly had the opportunity to do so—but he chose to remain silent; he was settling his score with the usurers of war.

We know that he was transferred to a hangar at Barajas airport, where the victorious army and its judiciary were gathering enemy officers and subjecting them to summary trials, which invariably ended with a death sentence.

While Alegría was imprisoned at Barajas, the Republican officers must have ignored and even avoided him, to judge by what he wrote to his fiancée, Inés. In a letter that unaccountably took three months to reach its destination, he described his situation cryptically as that of a "Leibnizian monad." The other prisoners did not talk to him. They distrusted Alegría as one distrusts the enemy, excluding him from those moments of respite in which they managed to think not of what was waiting for them but of what they were leaving behind. Everything had happened so fast; it had all been so vertiginous that Captain Alegría's life had dissolved into a blend of murky feelings, hostile solitude, and impious fears. He dared not pray for fear of attracting the attention, and the wrath, of God.

He remained in that bleak hangar from the fourth to the eighth of April, withering like a dried-out wineskin, his characteristic composure dwindling with each bout of nausea, each dizzy spell, each shiver, each twinge of hunger. A group of Falangists took down the prisoners' details as the men stood at attention and were subjected to insults, beatings, and humiliation, before being stripped of their insignia, their papers, and all their personal belongings. A certain Colonel Luzón—the records list only his last name and rank—refused to give up his stars, because they had been honorably earned in combat, so a pistol shot stripped him of rank, stars, and life all at once.

Finally, on the eighth, came the moment that Alegría had been waiting for. Halfway through the morning, when shafts of daylight turned the hangar into a cage of murmuring nostalgia, hundreds of huddled men fell uncannily silent as the names were called out.

We come now to the most solid evidence of what really happened, the key document in the dossier, the factual heart of this story, which we hope has not strayed too far from actual events. Were they not open to misinterpretation, we would simply have transcribed the proceedings of the court-martial that condemned Captain Carlos Alegría to death by firing squad, for treason and offense against the state.

We have chosen not to reproduce the first part of the proceedings, in which Captain Alegría's personal details are recorded, he is stripped of his rank, expelled from the army, and formally identified as a military traitor in wartime. The proceedings continue as follows:

"When former Captain Carlos Alegría was asked about the date on which he had decided to cross over to the enemy lines, betraying the Glorious National Army, he replied, 'In the early hours of the morning, on the twenty-eighth of March of the current year of the Victory.'

"When asked about his reasons for thus betraying the Fatherland, he replied that he had done it because Lieutenant Colonel Tella and Lieutenant Colonel Barrón had captured the outlying suburbs of Villaverde and Carabanchel; because Asensio and Castejón's troops had entered the Casa de Campo in Madrid, defeating the Eleventh International Brigade, which had retreated to the banks of the River Manzanares.

"When asked if he considered said advances to be sufficient reason for betraying the Glorious National Army, he replied that he had also done it because General Varela had ordered Asensio to cross the River Manzanares with his tanks, which Asensio succeeded in doing on the fifteenth of November, 1936, the day on which Barrón took control of the Military Hospital in Carabanchel Bajo. That he had done it because the Popular Front government had left Madrid nine days before, considering the city, in effect, to have fallen, and entrusting its defense to General Miaja, whose troops consisted in part of the International Brigades under the command of General Kléber.

"And because, on that fifteenth of November, Lieutenant Colonel Asensio Cabanillas, commanding a company of regular troops from Tetuán, had entered the Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid and advanced toward the Parque de la Moncloa, and had personally directed the fighting at the Clinical Hospital of Madrid, which was under construction.

"Ordered to be quiet, the accused obeyed.

"When asked how he knew about the above-mentioned events, the accused replied that he was in charge of quartermaster supply for the southern and southeastern fronts, under the direct orders of General Varela. And that was how he knew that in November, 1936, Colonel Ríos Capapé and Mohamed el Mizzian reached the Calle Ferraz, in central Madrid, where the only resistance they met was that of retreating snipers.

"Ordered to be quiet, the accused obeyed.

"When asked if the heroic deeds of the National Army were his reason for betraying the Fatherland, he replied that they were not, that the real reason was that our objective at that time was not to win the war against the Popular Front.

"When asked what our objective was, if not to win the Glorious Crusade, the accused replied, 'To kill them.' "

After which he was found guilty of treason and collusion with the enemy, and sentenced to death.

Both the stamp and the signature are illegible.

The former Captain Alegría had, at last, spoken of the usury of war to his superior officers.

From this point on, the story is based on information compounded from various sources, some of it verifiable, but much of it derived from the vague memories of witnesses who would rather have forgotten it. Nevertheless, we have given credit to dim recollections of sentences murmured in anxious dreams, for they, too, are part of the appalling truth, even if not themselves true.

The former Captain Alegría, now a civilian, a traitor, and a dead man, was returned to the hangar where so many others had already been or would soon be sentenced. He wrote three letters, at least: one to Inés, which we were able to consult; one to his parents in Huérmeces, whose house had been destroyed by the flood waters of the Urbel, which swept away the elderly couple's memory, possessions, and will to live, so that, when they were informed of their son's madness, they fixed their gaze on an arbitrary point in the landscape and fell into a silence so stubborn that they refused confession even on their deathbeds. Alegría's third letter was addressed to Generalísimo Franco, Caudillo of Spain. We know this from a sentence in his letter to Inés: "I have written not to beg for pardon, or to repent, but to tell him that what I have witnessed others have lived through, and he should not imagine that it can remain forgotten among the lilies."

In another letter to Inés, who was a primary-school teacher in Ubierna, Alegría wrote cryptically of the solitude that was turning him into an empty shell, and borrowed the words of others (as he had done earlier, quoting St. John of the Cross) in order to speak of himself, as if he did not dare express his feelings directly: "I am a was, a will be, and a weary is." There is no passion, or even love, in his farewell letter, just a vague sense of regret, an indictment of the times, a lament for lost opportunities: "I did not have time to make plans, because the atrocities revoked my future, but rest assured that had I made any, you would have been at the center of them."

The most appropriate metaphor for Alegría's life from this point on is a whirlpool of oil: slow, viscous, inexorable. Enduring solitude in that apprehensive hangar, at a distance from everyone and everything, enveloped in his own separateness, he waited for the moment that would announce the end, unaware that the end, for him, had not yet been written.

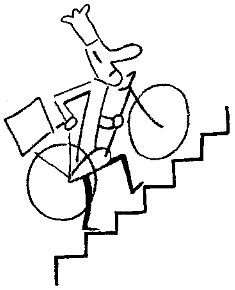
For nine days he waited his turn. Each morning a group of prisoners was chosen at random, forced to line up in pairs, and loaded into trucks, which drove away noisily into the warm, desolate landscape. Few said goodbye. Most went in silence. The calm acceptance of death was no doubt familiar to Alegría, thanks to his long observation of the enemy, but knowing that the date of his death was a matter of chance, of where he happened to be in the hangar, must have been intolerable. Alegría could not abide chance; he needed order.

Presumably, then, he felt a certain relief when, on the eighteenth, he stood exhausted with the rest of the day's cull in the pitiless rain. Packed into a truck, the condemned men, fighting to keep their balance, looked one another in the eye, joined hands, and huddled together. Halfway through the journey, he felt someone take his hand, and in that long, silent grip his solitude dissolved and he was accorded a place in the community of the vanquished. He looked up and someone met his gaze. Then someone else, other eyes reddened by exhaustion and stifled tears. "Forgive me," he said, and plunged into that turmoil of wretched bodies.

It must have been eight in the morning by the time they reached Arganda del Rey. Everything was ready: a stone wall, which was all that was left of a ruined stable, an expanse of level ground, a firing squad, and a cordon of guards. More trucks arrived, swelling the ranks of the condemned and adding to the sum of despair. A priest with a purple stole presided over the ceremony, routinely beseeching God's mercy in Latin. There were almost a hundred men to be executed and they had to squeeze tightly together in order to fit in front of the wall. There were a few moments of silence while the priest completed his prayers. He made a languid sign of the Cross as if sadly waving goodbye. And then, immediately, "Firing squad, ready." Silence. "Aim." Silence. "Fire!"

If anyone cried out, no one could hear it.

When Alegría regained consciousness, he was submerged in a chaos of dead bodies and earth. At first he was aware only of pain, but gradually he realized that, once again, he had broken the laws of this world, in which time does not go backward. He was alive. In that haphazard conglomerate of marrow, motionless cartilage, congealed blood, excrement, stilled breath, and dead hearts there were pockets of air that allowed the buried man to breathe. He was alive.



There is one darkness for the living and another for the dead; Alegría confused the two at first, because he did not try to open his eyes, but when he heard the sound of his own sobbing he knew that he was hearing more than the silence of death. He was alive.

Alegría later spoke of that moment as a kind of birth. His exhaustion was such that it took him some time to understand the position of his own body, which was pinned by the tangled crush of corpses. His head was throbbing with such pain that he felt as if his skull had been split in two. Slowly, reluctant to disturb the dead, he extricated his arms, pausing after each effort, trying not to breathe too deeply for fear of using up whatever air there was, gathering the strength that he would need to shift the weight that held him down. Before the execution, he had seen the grave in which he was now buried, and, given its depth, he knew that there could not be many bodies on top of him. With each successive attempt to climb, he felt something give, a lessening of the force pressing down on him, until finally it yielded altogether and he emerged into the open air. Earth took his place. He dragged himself onto an embankment, where he collapsed, trying to contain his sobbing. He was intact, except for his spectacles.

A bullet had grazed the top of his head, opening a long wound but not fracturing the skull. There was blood on his face, forehead, and neck, but earth had cauterized the wound, so although it had now begun to bleed again, there had been a reason, other than fear, for his heart to continue beating while he was unconscious.

Night was falling.

We have little detailed knowledge of the next episode in Alegría's story, for although he did occasionally consent to speak of what had happened before his resurrection, he hardly ever said a word about how he made his way from Arganda del Rey to La Acebeda—a village of adobe and slate, south of the Somosierra Pass, which hibernates in the snow all winter and then, in the first mild days of spring, scatters its busy inhabitants like red lavender across the fields.

Only animals could bear the sight of him, he later told one of his jailers; when humans saw that filthy, emaciated body alive and moving, when they saw the pain crystallized in its gaze, they fled. This was a time when only the dead did not inspire fear.

Farmhands finally found him collapsed and dying in the fields of La Acebeda, and at first believed that he was dead, but as they proceeded to remove his boots, they heard a plea for water issue from his bloody head. He was wearing the uniform of the victorious army, but his body was shuddering in the throes of defeat.

We now know that various options were considered, from burying him alive—since he might have been shot by a local—to letting him die among the rockroses and then informing the authorities that a body had been found. But a determined old woman decided to give him the water he was begging or and cleaned his face with her skirt.

"We are all children of God, even his kind," she said. Hers was the first of a series of caring acts that continued for three days and succeeded in keeping the dead man alive. Everything was conspiring to make it impossible for him to abandon his life as one abandons a dream upon waking.

The villagers kept him there among the rockroses, partly out of fear and partly because they thought that he might die if moved. They dressed his wound with futile ointments, wrapped him in a blanket, gave him water and a little food. We now know that, under the circumstances, these were acts of prodigal mercy, and Alegría showed his gratitude by never telling anyone their names.

That someone should approach a man with oozing wounds, a man encrusted with excrement and blood, should lift his head and gently wet his lips, patiently feed him spoonfuls of a soup that even the dead could digest, and speak a few words of comfort—all this, he thought, was proof that something human had survived the ravages of war. If it weren't for the cracks in his parched lips, Alegría would have smiled. That's what he said afterward.

He also told the nurses who cared for him later in prison that while he had lain there, trying to ignore the voice of the earth demanding its due, what had tormented him most was not the fear of death but the shame of being seen in such a state of decay, the mortifying thought that the Good Samaritans of the village might smell his nauseating breath or be soiled by the pus seeping from his wounds. He covered himself with the blanket when they brought him food and would not let anyone come too close. It seems to us now that this was also a way to avoid having to give explanations.

The fourth day dawned dimly through fog, and the blanket was so soaked with dew that he woke riddled with fever. That hostile place was tearing at his life; he wanted to die in Huérmeces. He gathered all his strength, making use even of his fevered spasms to get himself moving. After carefully folding the blanket to show that he was grateful, he put the water and the boiled potatoes back into the bag in which the villagers had brought them and set off for his town beyond the mountains, which hid their ferocity among the clouds. He started climbing toward Somosierra.

Those mountains divide Spain in two, and now it occurs to us that the harrowing effort of crossing them was another way of defying everything that separates, of trying to be on both sides at once.

Dazed by fever, Alegría struggled to find his way, climbing the slope at a distance from the road so as not to be seen by those travelling along it—mostly military convoys, transporting supplies, soldiers, arms, and all that is required to keep an occupied territory under control. Like other wars, this one had come to an official end but would never truly be resolved. Civilian vehicles were few and far between; the ones that did appear had likely been requisitioned. Alegría knew that anyone who could move freely was a potential enemy. Not that those who remained in one place could be counted on as allies. What side can a soldier choose when he has simultaneously won and lost the war?

And yet, although he wanted to hide, he dared not stray too far from the road, because he feared that his strength might fail him, in which case he planned to lie down on the verge in the hope that his body would be found and given a Christian burial, or at least not left to feed the wolves and wild dogs that he had seen on the prowl, patiently awaiting the end of his pilgrimage. The resurrection of the flesh, he thought, required a certain tidiness on the part of the deceased, but all he had left was revolting, humiliating decay. His stench was so strong that it could not be ignored, despite the heather, the rock-roses, the primroses, and the thyme.

These precautions slowed his progress. The journey lasted three days, on the first of which he ate the potatoes and drank the water. After that, in the cold of the mountains, he had only the bag to wrap around himself at night and to protect the raw wound on his head from the fierce midday sun.

Finally, he reached Somosierra, a village of granite and slate that would have no charm if it weren't for the surrounding landscape. He arrived at evening, with the sun setting behind him, and that dense, slanted light afforded him a kind of cover, allowing him to approach the tollhouse, which had been converted into a checkpoint. There they were, the soldiers of the army that had won the final battle, with the uniforms, boots, jackets, and arms that he had distributed for so many years. He felt neither nostalgia nor remorse, only sadness.

For hours, he watched those figures, blurred by his myopia. When darkness fell, the soldiers built fires to light the road and keep them warm. He observed a perfunctory changing of the guard, executed with a lack of enthusiasm that bespoke boredom rather than victory.

That sight must have been what inspired the following reflection, recorded on a scrap of paper found in his pocket on the day of his second, and definitive, death, when he blew his life out with a rifle snatched from one of his guards.

"Are these listless, weary soldiers the winners of the war? No, all they want is to go home, where instead of getting a hero's welcome they'll be strangers to life, cut off from what was once theirs, and over time they will sink into defeat. They will become one with those who lost the war, separated only by the stigma of mutual bitterness. And, like the losers, they will come to fear the real victor, who defeated both the enemy army and his own. Only a few dead men will be regarded as the heroes of this war."

Fever, hunger, and disgust at his own state must have quelled these thoughts, and even his memory, for, gathering what little strength he had left, dragging himself along—at this point he could not even walk—he slowly approached the checkpoint, oblivious of the soldiers' shock and repulsion at the sight of that crawling bundle of rags.

Between sobs, he said, "I'm one of you." ♦

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Chris Andrews.*)

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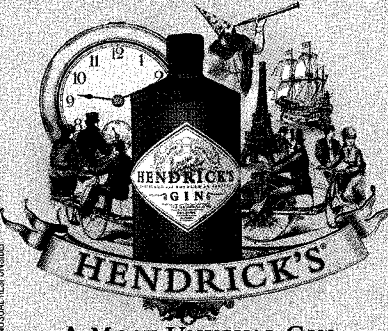

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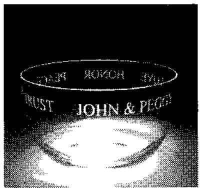

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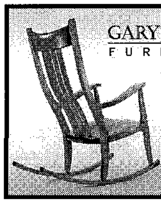

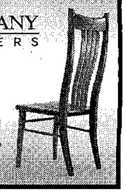

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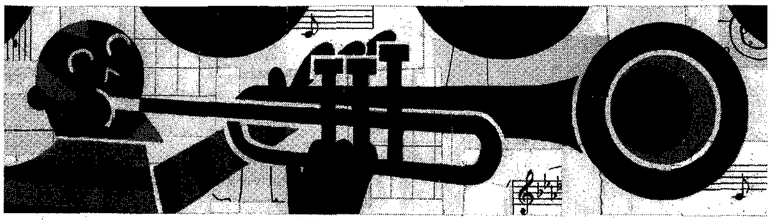


LORENZO MATTOTTI

BOOKS

EXTENDED PERFORMANCE

Saving the Republic of Aburiria.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

The Kenyan novelist, playwright, journalist, and academic Ngugi wa Thiong'o has written provocatively, in his book of essays "Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams" (1998), about "performance"—not merely theatrical action, as in the performance of a play, but "any action that assumes an audience during the actualization." He cited in illustration the exercise of political power, which involves "variations on the performance theme." A 1999 interview with Charles Cantalupo, a Penn State professor, elicited this elaboration:

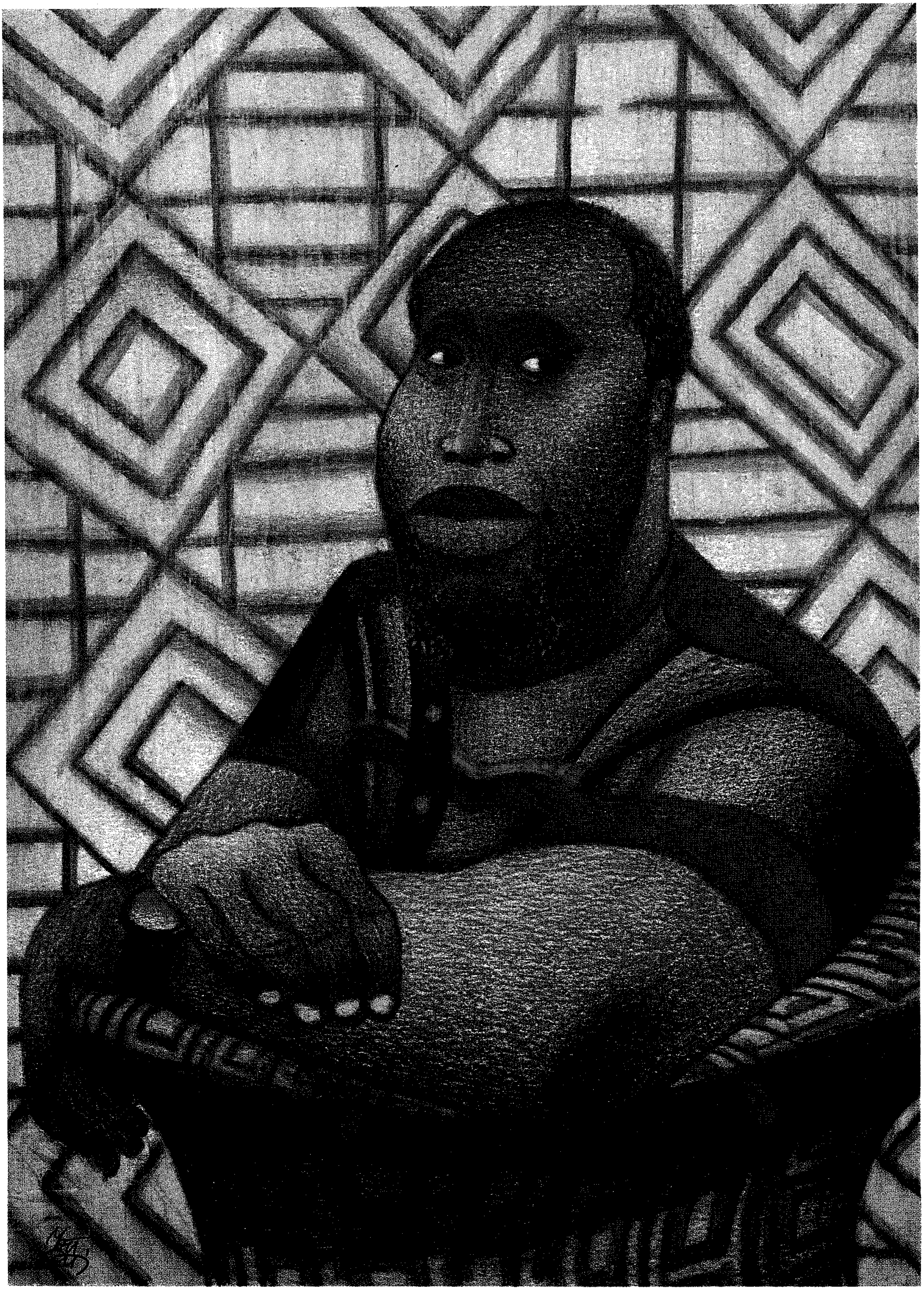
> "So much in society depends on 'performance.' It provides new insights into certain behaviors. It is central to so many things. For example, you can't have religion without performance: performance, weekly, daily. . . . Performance enables people to negotiate their way through the various realms of being. Performance is a means for people to realize their unknown, even if it's only in the imagination. Performance is a very important concept. I have learned from it, but also I have been involved in it."

In his crowded career and eventful life, Ngugi has enacted, for all to see, the paradigmatic trials and quandaries of a contemporary African writer, caught in sometimes implacable political, social, racial, and linguistic currents.

Born in 1938 in the village of Kamiriithu, just north of Nairobi, in the so-called "white highlands" of colonial Kenya, Ngugi was the fifth child of the third of his father's four wives; his father was a peasant farmer compelled to become a squatter after the British Imperial Act of 1915. Ngugi attended mission-run and independent Gikuyu schools. He read Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson, H. Rider Haggard and John Buchan. He was for a time a devout Christian, and at the age of twenty-three married his first wife, Nyambura, who was to bear six of his eventual nine children. In 1963, he received a bachelor's degree in English from Makerere University College, in Kampala, Uganda, and for a time practiced journalism in Nairobi. The previous year, his first play, "The Black Hermit," had been produced in Kampala. In 1964, he left for England to pursue graduate studies at Leeds University; the same year, he published, under the name James Ngugi, "Weep Not, Child," his first novel and among the first to be published in English by a black East African. "The River Between" (1965) and the classic "A Grain of Wheat" (1967) followed. Their success did not deter him, however, from questioning the importance granted in Kenyan education to the colonial language. At Leeds, with revelatory effect, he had read Marx, Fanon, and the Caribbean George Lamming, whom he credited with composing "the first novel that painted a picture of myself in Africa." In 1968, he wrote, with two others, an article entitled "On the Abolition of the English Department," asking, "If there is need for a 'study of the historic continuity of a single culture,' why can't this be African?"

Ngugi made headlines when, in 1969, he changed his name to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and when, in late 1977, Daniel arap Moi, then Kenya's Vice-President, ordered him to be detained in Kamiti Maximum Security Prison without charges or a trial. His offense had been involvement with a community theatre in his home village, and his co-authorship, with Ngugi wa Mirii, of a play in the Gikuyu language, "Ngaahika Ndeenda" ("I Will Marry When I Want"). The play was banned; the theatre in Kamiriithu was razed. When the playwright emerged from prison, he announced that henceforth he would write in Gikuyu. His association with the theatre, he has explained, was a "homecoming: the only language I could use was my own." Prior to this decision, according to Maya Jaggi's profile in the *Guardian*, he had thought he must stop writing; "I knew about whom I was writing, but not for whom." His first novel in Gikuyu, "Caitaani Mutharaba-ini" ("Devil on the Cross"), of 1980, was written in prison, on toilet paper. His last novel in English, "Petals of Blood" (1977), furiously tackled, from a leftist angle, contemporary corruption in Kenya and its government. Upon his release from prison, he was not reinstated in his position at Nairobi University, and in 1982 he left Kenya for London. His exile eventually took him to California, where he is a professor of English and comparative literature at the Irvine campus of the University of California, and the head of its International Center for Writing and Translation; his second wife, Njeeri wa Ngugi, directs the faculty and staff counselling center there.

Ngugi had vowed never to return to Kenya as long as Moi, who had become the President, and his Kanu Party were in power; both were ousted in the elections of December, 2002, and in 2004 Ngugi returned, with Njeeri, to launch the first volume of "Murogi wa Kagogo," a thousand-page novel that he had been writing since 1997. Met by a crowd of well-wishers and press at Nairobi Airport, the author announced that he wanted to be "in touch with the everyday." Two weeks later, the everyday in Kenya arrived with a vengeance when the couple were attacked by four men in their high-security apartment complex. Ngugi was beaten and his face burned with cigarettes; in another room, Njeeri was sexually assaulted. Jewelry, a laptop,



Ngugi wa Thiong'o has enacted in his own life the paradigmatic trials and quandaries of a contemporary African writer.

and some cash were taken, but Ngugi maintained to Jaggi:

> "It wasn't a simple robbery. It was political—whether by remnants of the old regime or part of the new state outside the main current. They hung around as though waiting for something, and the whole thing was meant to humiliate, if not eliminate, us. . . . We think there's a bigger circle of forces—not just those who attacked us."

Three security guards and a nephew of Ngugi's by marriage were apprehended, and their trial is still going on. The frequency of violent crime in Nairobi is itself perhaps adverse comment enough upon the forces at work in postcolonial Africa. The forces ensconced in Ngugi's imaginary Free Republic of Aburiria, the venue of "Murogi wa Kagogo," are demonically malign, and even the benign counterforces partake of magic and sorcery. English-language readers can now explore Aburiria in an English translation by the author, under the title "Wizard of the Crow" (Pantheon; $30).

ECCE HOMO

Every thing that is
our strength
is also our weakness
everything carries within itself
the stigma of its opposite sign
like a number tattooed on a prisoner's arm
like a letter sewn onto a deportee's coat

there's no escaping it

even if we were to walk at a certain pace
head held high
number and letter warn:
here is a victim of those clothed in wolves' skins
here branded by history
ecce homo

—*Ryszard Kapuściński*

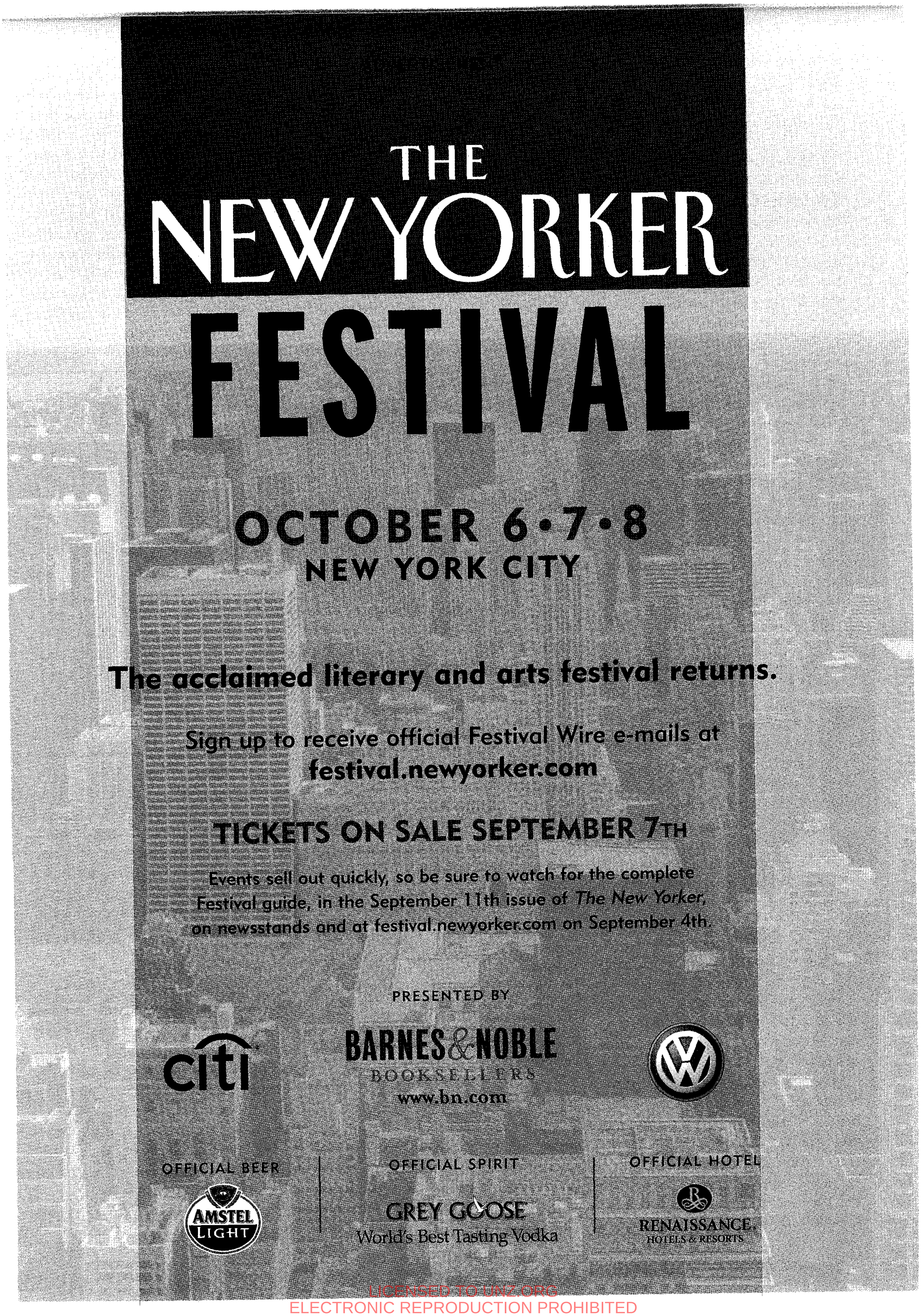
(Translated, from the Polish, by Diana Kuprel and Marek Kusiba.)

Such readers would do well to remember that it is a translation from a language whose narrative traditions are mostly oral and heavy on performance; the tale is fantastic and didactic, told in broad strokes of caricature. Its principal political actors wear physical distortions like large, firelit masks. Aburiria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Markus Machokali, had been an ordinary Member of Parliament until he went to London for plastic surgery to enlarge his eyes, "to make them ferociously sharp, or as he put it in Kiswahili, *Yawe Macho Kali*, so that he would be able to spot the enemies of the Ruler no matter how far their hiding places. Enlarged to the size of electric bulbs, his eyes were now the most prominent feature of his face, dwarfing his nose, cheeks and forehead." A rival, Silver Sikiokuu, observing Machokali's subsequent promotion, flew to Paris and had his ears made "larger than a rabbit's and always primed to detect danger at any time and from any direction"; he is named Minister of State, "in charge of spying on the citizenry." A third aspirant to high office, Benjamin Mambo, had his tongue elongated in Paris, but "the tongue, like a dog's, now hung out way beyond his lips, rendering speech impossible," until a remedial operation in Germany extended his lips so "the tongue protruded just a little." A late entrant to the halls of power, John Kaniuru, is known as Johnny the Nose, John Nose, or "the nosy one."

As for the nameless Ruler, he gradually grows larger all over, through a mysterious complaint diagnosed as a full-body pregnancy, until his head scrapes the ceiling of even the grandest chamber of state. When he at last bursts, around page 700, he gives birth to an abortive Baby Democracy and a cloud of foul-smelling smog that permeates the capital, Eldares; from his ordeal the Ruler emerges slender as a snake, with a head "the size of a fist" and a flickering tongue observed by at least one keen-eyed witness to be forked. "Wizard of the Crow"'s fantasia of corruption and malformation is erratically filtered through the excited, drink-primed telling of an ordinary policeman, a delegate from the everyday—Constable Arigaigai Gathere, known as A.G. Any inconsistencies or vague spots in A.G.'s and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's tangled tale are passed off as an aspect of oral narrative, wherein auditors repeat to others what they hear and thereby every listener becomes "a teller of tales, insisting on his own authority."

The forces of evil in the seething dictatorship of Aburiria are gamely resisted by a young couple, Kamiti wa Karimiri (sometimes known as Comet Kamiti) and Grace Nyawira, who has her own gifts of shape-shifting and deception. The two meet in the office of Eldares Modern Construction and Real Estate, where Grace is the boss's secretary, and Kamiti applies for a job. Though the young man holds a B.A. in economics and an M.B.A. earned in India, the boss, Titus Tajirika—who turns out, in the many plot twists ahead, to triumphantly embody the indestructible spirit of Aburirian venality—denies him a job. The secretary, however, follows Kamiti when the office closes, and a beautiful liaison begins. Soon they meet again, disguised as beggars, and take refuge in her house. There they talk and tussle; as their clothes slip off, he is transfixed by "her long gazelle neck, her shapely breasts so full, her nipples, the color of blackberry, so erect," but, since he fails to produce a condom, he wins only a stern lecture on AIDS and V.D. Later, when she has pursued him across the plains to his mountain haven, he still hasn't learned his lesson. "I am sorry that I don't have any condoms," he sheepishly says, and again encounters contradiction:

> "No, no, don't stop," Nyawira told him. "I brought some," she added as she unbuttoned his trousers.
>
> On the ground, in the cave, now wrapped in darkness, they found themselves airborne over hills and valleys, floating through blue clouds to the mountaintop of pure ecstasy, from where, suspended in space, they felt the world go round and round, before they descended, sliding down a rainbow, toward the



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> earth, their earth, where the grass, plants, and animals seemed to be singing a lullaby of silence as Nyawira and Kamiti, now locked in each other's arms, slept the sleep of babies, the dawn of a new day awaiting.

O.K.—back to saving Aburiria. Kamiti when we first see him is airborne; light-headed from hunger, he collapses at the foot of a mountain of garbage where he is foraging, and sees himself from on high. His "bird self" hints at an unusual disposition, as does a preternatural sense of smell that nearly overwhelms him with a "stench blast" when he is near money or greedy people, and that signals Nyawira's proximity with a powerful smell of flowers. Fleeing the police in the wake of a political protest, he and Nyawira improvise a fetish of bones and rags and he pens a warning: "THIS PROPERTY BELONGS TO A WIZARD WHOSE POWER BRINGS DOWN HAWKS AND CROWS FROM THE SKY. TOUCH THIS HOUSE AT YOUR PERIL. SGD. WIZARD OF THE CROW." The highly suggestible Arigaigai Gathere reads the message and quickly propagates to the nation word of a wonderful wizard. Indeed, Kamiti, so unprepossessing that he has failed to find a job in three years of looking, does show a knack for consultation and healing. When, newly rich on consultation fees, he visits his home village, his father reveals that his grandfather Kamiti wa Kienjeku was "a holy seer, a spiritual leader working with forces fighting the British in the war of independence." As if this genetic evidence needed cinching, his father explains, "With us, seers are born holding a seashell; and my son, you were born gripping a shell in your little fist." Kamiti's resourceful sessions with the disturbed and the possessed form some of the relatively few passages where the novel lifts free of performance into human interest. His example spawns, in bedevilled Aburiria, a plague of "afrochiatrists." When the Wizard, with his moral scruples and self-doubts, is not onstage, the novel becomes puppetry, a Punch-and-Judy show whose grotesque politicos keep whacking one another.

The political development worth protesting is, in a novel rife with Biblical allusions, the government's determination to build, as a birthday present to the Ruler, a kind of Tower of Babel—"a building to the very gates of Heaven so that the Ruler could call on God daily to say good morning or good evening or simply how was your day today, God?" The project, called "Heavenscrape or simply Marching to Heaven," overflows with opportunities for graft but needs the support of the Global Bank, whose representatives pay diplomatic visits but do not quite commit. Against the giant boondoggle of Marching to Heaven stands the subversive but widespread, strongly feminist Movement for the Voice of the People, of which Nyawira is a leader. The members of the movement scatter plastic snakes and embarrass the government whenever they can, performing obscenely, for example, as dancers at a state ceremony.

The author of this bulky book offers more indignation than analysis in his portrait of postcolonial Africa. The days of the flamboyantly costumed independence leaders, with their theatrical fly whisks (like Kenya's founding father, Jomo Kenyatta) and "monkey skins, dashikis, or collarless shirts," are over; Aburiria's Ruler is "always in Western-style suits," albeit "decorated with patches from the skins of the big cats." Like Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, he wears a leopard-skin hat. His suits, tailored in Europe, have pinstripes "made of tiny letters that read MIGHT IS RIGHT." The passing of the Cold War is felt keenly by his ilk: "The Ruler . . . missed the cold war, when he could play one side against the other." Now "there was only one superpower and it knew only how to be wooed, not how to woo." The Global Bank is a cat's-paw of the United States, whose envoy, accompanied by Ambassador Gabriel Gemstone, tries to explain to the Ruler the new situation:

> We are in the post-cold war era, and our calculations are affected by the laws and needs of globalization. The history of capital can be summed up in one phrase: *in search of freedom*. Freedom to expand, and now it has a chance at the entire globe for its theater. It needs a democratic space to move as its own logic demands. So I have been sent to urge you to start thinking about turning your country into a democracy. Who knows? Maybe with your blessings, some of your ministers might even want to form opposition parties.

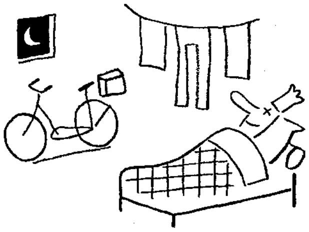
The Ruler, however, prospering for so long under the rule of disorder ("for any attempt on the part of the people to organize themselves was deemed by the Ruler's government as a challenge to its authority"), cannot adjust to the new realism. His code, written out in his own testament "Political Theory," asserts, "Real crooks are guided by realism." On this principle he promotes the thoroughly, helplessly venal Titus Tajirika, who has had his sympathetic moments and his momentary reversals but keeps bouncing back. The Ruler "had started to think well of Tajirika the moment he realized that the man was a crook," who could be entrusted "with any task that required bending or breaking the law under the guise of legality." Extreme crookedness insures extreme loyalty to another crook, he reasons.

And where does all this—seven hundred and sixty-six pages of fiction too aggrieved and grim to be called satire—leave Africa/Aburiria, "Aburiria of crooked roads, robberies, runaway viruses of death, hospitals without medicine, rampant unemployment without relief, daily insecurity, epidemic alcoholism"? Though there are some changes at the top, "shit is still shit, even by another name," feisty Nyawira decrees. "The battle lines may be murky, but they have not changed." The Wizard, more ambivalently surveying all that has passed, reflects upon another sort of line, "the thinness of the line that divided the real and the unreal in human lives." The novel's frequent recourse to magic realism, in the course of what its own text admits may seem "too incredible a narrative of magic and greed," would seem appropriate to a culture so susceptible to the claims of the supernatural. But somehow magic realism still works best in the supple hands of Gabriel García Márquez and José Saramago. Discussing "Wizard of the Crow" with Charles Cantalupo, when the novel was still in progress, Ngugi declined detailed comment on its contents, saying, "The characters are engaged in the constant performance of their own being for the narrative. You never quite know who they are. Often they reinvent themselves through performance. Even I, as their author, do not know where or how the whole novel is going to end except in the constant performance of their own being." The narrative, then, is a journey without a destination, and its characters are improv artists. This ambitious, long-mulled attempt to sustain the spell of oral narrative in an era of electro-visual distractions leaves the Wizard where the reader finds him, up in the air. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Night Bus, *by Giampiero Rigosi, translated from the Italian by Ann Goldstein (Bitter Lemon; $14.95).* Francesco is a gambling-addicted bus driver in Bologna, with a thuggish debt collector on his trail; Leila is a smart dame with a great pair of legs, who each night looks for a man to bed, drug, and rob. In perfect noir fashion, the two become uneasy allies, trying to escape a pair of vicious intelligence agents after Leila unknowingly swipes a mysterious document from a victim's apartment. Rigosi somewhat overdoes character quirks—one agent has a condition that leads him to constantly leak tears as he slices apart his victims—but an ever-expanding cast of creeps and criminals keeps the plot accelerating, and he describes the dripping of blood and the angle of a broken neck as lovingly as the preparation of a nice eggplant parmigiana.

Water for Elephants, *by Sara Gruen (Algonquin; $23.95).* To replicate the salty vernacular of a Depression-era circus, Gruen, in her third novel, did extensive research in archives and in the field, and her work pays off admirably. The Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth is a roving fleabag ensemble of "cooch tents," "kinkers," and "hay burners," whose tyrannical m.c. is always on the lookout for "born freaks." Unfortunately, Jacob Jankowski, the novel's narrator and protagonist, carries less conviction than the period idiom. Recalling, near the end of his life, his work as a veterinarian for the circus and his love for a colleague's wife, he comes off as so relentlessly decent—an unwavering defender of animals, women, dwarves, cripples, and assorted ethnic groups—that he ceases to be interesting as a character.



The Senator and the Socialite, *by Lawrence Otis Graham (HarperCollins; $27.95).* In 1878, the *Times* ran its first wedding announcement for a black couple: Senator Blanche Kelso Bruce, a former slave who entered the Senate in the fading days of Reconstruction (many newspapers ignored his election, assuming that he would never be seated), and Josephine Willson, a daughter of the light-skinned black élite. The Bruces established what the author calls America's first black dynasty, although its members "lived much of their lives outside of black circles." Graham, whose "Our Kind of People" profiled the black upper class, recovers the history of a family that broke barriers in Washington and at Exeter and Harvard. At the same time, he offers a devastating view of the compromises it made. The Bruces' son was an "intellectual dandy" and snob who described a black revival meeting as "a reversion into barbarism." When the family, "after years of favoring . . . white acquaintances" over "accomplished black men," was engulfed in scandal, it found that it had few allies in either community.

Rainer Maria Rilke and Lou Andreas-Salomé: The Correspondence, *translated from the German by Edward Snow and Michael Winkler (Norton; $39.95).* When Rilke first met Salomé, in 1897, he was twenty-one, an aspiring poet, and she was a married woman of thirty-six who had published a multitude of books and essays on philosophical and literary subjects. Their correspondence was initially one-sided—Rilke, besotted, sent a torrent of mail, while Salomé wished she could make him "*go completely away*"—but the two developed a passionate partnership as friends, lovers, confidants, and counsellors. This collection of some two hundred letters, written over nearly three decades, enriches our picture of Rilke and Salomé with curious details: Rilke makes arrangements for Salomé's beloved dog, in advance of a visit; Salomé, practicing in mid-life as a psychoanalyst, claims success treating patients with Rilke's poems: "They heard *your* tone as that of Life."

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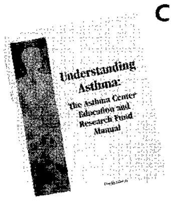

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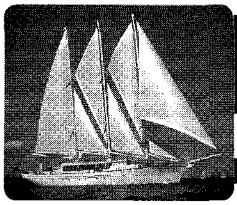

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THE ART WORLD

AMERICAN ABSTRACT

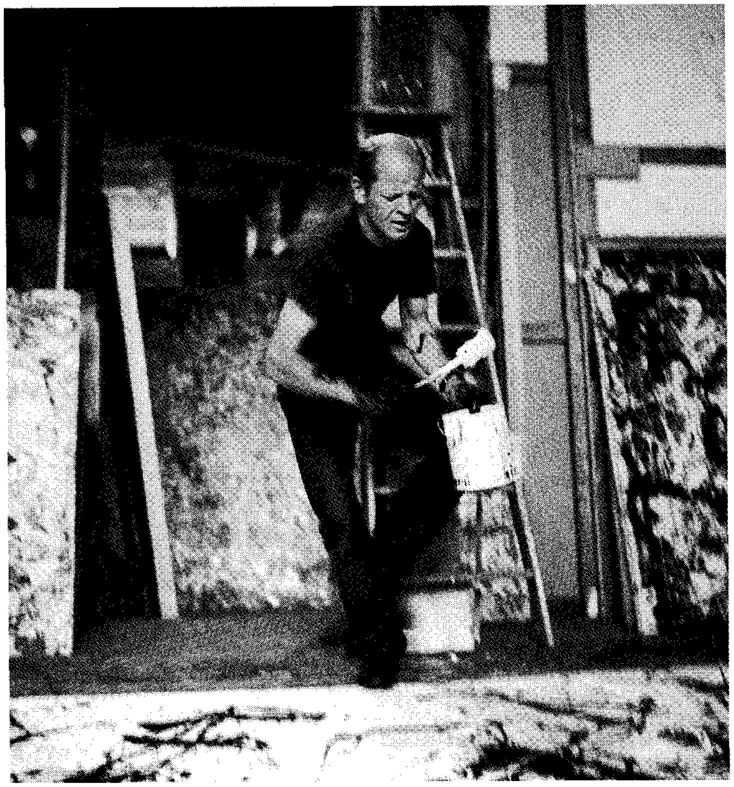
Real Jackson Pollock.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Half a century ago, on August 11, 1956, an Oldsmobile convertible driven by Jackson Pollock, who was drunk, hit a tree in the Springs, killing the artist and a passenger. It's a dismal enough anniversary—marked with scant attention by the finest art show in New York this summer, "No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper," at the Guggenheim—but glamorous, in its way. Pollock, like other doomed artists and martyrs to fame in his era—Charlie Parker and Billie Holiday, Marilyn Monroe and James Dean—advanced and, by destroying himself, oddly consecrated America's postwar cultural ascendancy. Sometimes a new, renegade sensibility really takes hold only when somebody is seen to have died for it.

Tragedy enhanced Pollock's status as the first American painter, after the corn-belt realist Grant Wood, to achieve general popular renown, as a shining native son. Born in Wyoming, Pollock came to New York, from California, in 1930. He was mentored at the Art Students League by Wood's American Scene colleague Thomas Hart Benton. He soon found the Expressionist and Surrealist tendencies of the downtown avant-garde more congenial than Benton's mannered figuration, partly because he was tormented by a belief that he could never draw properly. But a sense of nationalist mandate stayed with him. It's an undertone in his famous reply to the German painter and pedagogue Hans Hofmann, who had suggested that he try working from nature: "I am nature." The glowering Westerner who became known as Jack the Dripper seemed to speak not just for the country but *as* it, in person: the Great American Painter, at a moment that was hot for Great American thises and thats. His helplessly photogenic, clenched features, broadcast by *Life* in 1949, made him a pinup of seething manhood akin to Marlon Brando. It wasn't even necessary that Pollock be a great artist, though he was. Unlike Wood, he countered the humiliating authority of European modern art not by rejecting it but by eclipsing it. Abstraction may have still scandalized most Americans, but suddenly it was a homegrown scandal, with nothing sissified about it. The macho pose, an obligatory overcompensation for aestheticism in the nineteen-fifties, ill suited a man whose ruling emotion was fear, which sprung from an anxious childhood in a ragged, nomadic family. But it sold magazines.

Ed Harris's surprisingly trenchant 2000 bio-pic, "Pollock," showed why it isn't possible to separate the artist's legend from his work. Pollock's all-or-nothing ambition channelled the hopes of an idealistic, conspiratorial milieu. His wife, the artist Lee Krasner, the critic Clement Greenberg, the collector and dealer Peggy Guggenheim, and other ardent sophisticates—abetted by pressure from competing new masters, chiefly Willem de Kooning—groomed Pollock like a skittish thoroughbred for the big race. Before his myth became a media circus, it was a cottage industry, though conceived in rigorously artistic terms as an overthrow of Cubist and Surrealist conventions in avant-garde painting—of Picasso, in a word. "No Limits, Just Edges" recovers that focus, more through than despite an absence of big canvases. The show's limitation to works on paper (credibly termed paintings, not drawings, because even when the format is small and the medium is ink Pollock's practice obviates the distinction) is a boon to understanding the revolutionary character and protean magic of the drip technique. If there's a weakness in the show, it's an overrefinement in the curating, betrayed by the preference of the organizer, Susan Davidson, in league with other scholars, to call Pollock's procedure "pouring," a fussy nugget of jargon with no support from the dictionary. (Poured paint plays a supporting role in only some of the work.) Not just more accurate and time honored, the vulgar "drip" resonates with a still potent shock of naked materiality which Pollock originated and which has been a major trope in new art (it was decisive for minimalism) ever since. If we want to be precise about what Pollock did—drawing in the air above a canvas with a paint-loaded stick—the mot juste is "dribble."


Pollock in the Springs, photographed by Hans Namuth, in 1950.

CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY / HANS NAMUTH ESTATE

Given that Pollock's process remains incomparable, taken up by no other significant artist, his work has not ceased to pose problems of how to discriminate among its levels of quality. This show's abundant service to the eye, in that respect, will come in handy if another anniversary observance, augured a few months ago, comes to pass. I refer to the news that the son of two friends of Pollock's, now deceased, the photographer and designer Herbert Matter and the painter Mercedes Matter, had turned up a cache of thirty-two previously unknown Pollock works, most of them small drip paintings on board. The son, Alex Matter, and the Matters' dealer, Mark Borghi, promised to show them this year. A prominent Pollock scholar had pronounced the work authentic, though perhaps "experimental." Others bitterly demurred. A physics professor decided, based on a fractal analysis of the drip patterns, that the hand that made them wasn't Pollock's. All this played out sensationally in the press, accompanied by faintly plausible but unenchanting reproductions. They looked imitative to me. Of course, artists have been known to imitate themselves. The affair seems to have gone to ground for now. Borghi has said, through a publicist, that no exhibition is in the offing. Lacking the free-for-all symposium of such an event, the Guggenheim show enables quieter, more probing reflection.

Start with a fascinating failure from Pollock's wonder years, 1947-50. "Number 13, 1949," in oil, enamel, and aluminum paint, a dead spot in a sequence of fiercely energized pictures, has been cited in defense of "the Matter Pollocks." Like them, it has a blandly decorative effect—in contrast to the unresolved tumult that usually marks a less successful Pollock—but only because a boldly experimental motif proved not to work. After painting an amorphous ground of aluminum, white, red, and green, and before overlaying skeins of dripped white, Pollock executed an irregular network of brushed black diagonal bars. This use of geometric elements recalls earlier work in the show—strenuously forced mergers of regular forms with surreal figuration and expressive gesture—and looks ahead to the artist's last major drip painting, "Blue Poles" (1952), whose eponymous forms snarl like overloaded lightning rods. In "Number 13," the bars upstage the drips and downstage the underpainting. Analyzing the work is as instructive as an autopsy. You see the muscles and nerves of an amazing style in repose, which is nothing like the soaring serenity that Pollock attained elsewhere. In his best work, which he produced almost incessantly from 1947 until, after long sobriety, he succumbed to drink again, late in 1950, Pollock mastered a quality reminiscent of van Gogh, who wrote to his brother of being "calm even in the catastrophe."

From early on in the show, you feel the force, however baffled and flailing, of an ambition to reconcile boundless pictorial space (precedented in Mondrian, Kandinsky, and Miró) with raw, emotionally driven physicality. That's what came about when, by dripping, Pollock freed line from description and color from decoration in a work like "Untitled [Silver over Black, White, Yellow, and Red]" (1948). Warm colors yearn forward; black bites back; silver is everywhere and nowhere; all, as thick substance, configure a wall-like surface. The picture is an improbable but unalloyed visual fact, with nothing mythic about it—nothing American or not American, certainly. Pollock at his peak burned his past conditioning and present turmoil, his very identity and character as a man, and he burned them clean. There's nobody to recognize. That's why it can be hard at first sight to tell a true Pollock from a fake. He prepared us to believe that absolutely anything was possible for him. What determines authenticity for me is a hardly scientific, no doubt fallible intuition of a raging need that found respite only in art. ♦

NO COMMENT DEPARTMENT

From an article in Variety about the German release of Mel Brooks's "The Producers."

"People were applauding after the press screening. That hardly ever happens," says Matthias Schmidt, reviewer for Stern magazine. "Some said there should have been more scenes from the 'Springtime for Hitler' musical."

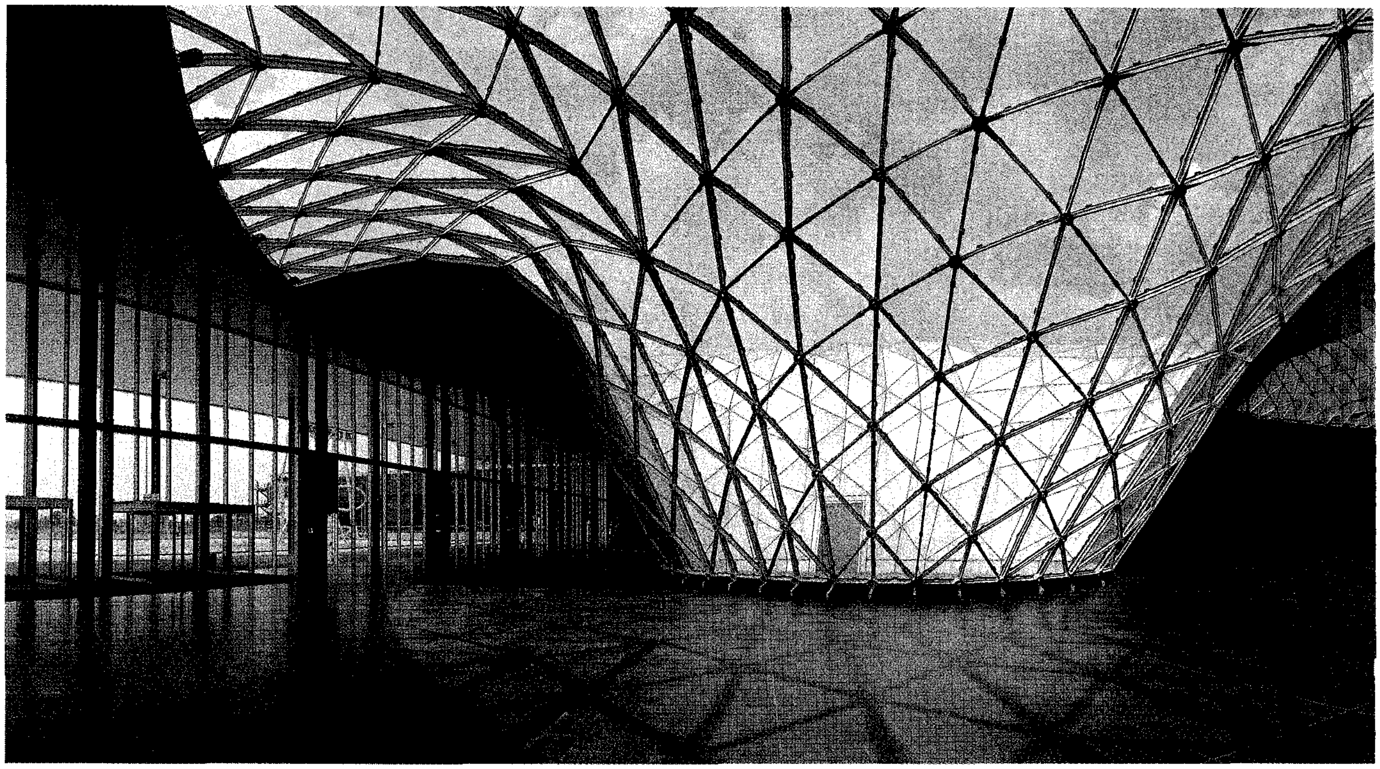
THE SKY LINE

UNCONVENTIONAL

Massimiliano Fuksas reinvents the convention center.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

Convention centers are supposed to revive cities by bringing in revenue from out-of-town visitors and creating local jobs. But the more gargantuan they become the less happily they fit into the places they are intended to benefit. In terms of architectural beauty, the convention center these days ranks somewhere close to the aircraft hangar, and for some of the same reasons: both must provide acres of space for a continually shifting configuration of objects, and cater to a temporary crowd of people whose minds are on other things. Putting one of these megaliths into the heart of a city is like trying to dock the Queen Mary in the local marina.



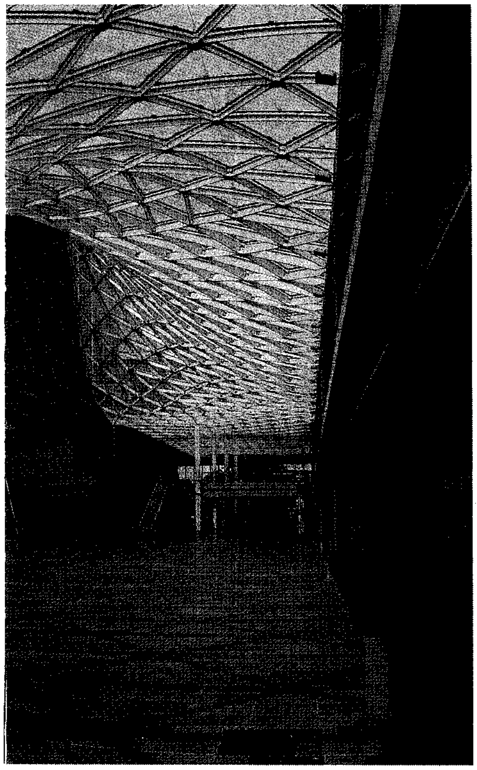
Fiera Milano, northwest of Milan: Its acreage is colossal, but an ingenious twisting canopy of glass and steel gives it a more human sc

Architects have tried various solutions to the problem of enclosing a huge volume of space and making it look palatable, generally without success. San Francisco originally put its Moscone Center underground, but the park on top feels unnatural—like a landscaped roof on a parking garage. Seattle's convention center sits above a freeway, which makes a little more sense, since one urban intrusion is used to mask another. In Washington, D.C., the architecture firm Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback wanted to minimize the new Washington Convention Center's impact on the city, but the only design scheme that seemed feasible was to break up the exhibition space into two separate levels, one of which bridges two city streets. New York, it would seem, gave up altogether: the Javits Center, designed by James Ingo Freed, just sprawls along five blocks of the far West Side, a reflective glass wall between the city and the Hudson River. In Pittsburgh, Rafael Viñoly tried a little harder, topping his building with a big, swooping roof intended to evoke the city's bridges. But generally people seem to want their convention centers to attract a crowd and to disappear at the same time.

Not so the Italians. They know better than to plant something in the heart of a city which doesn't fit there. The most exciting convention center in the world currently isn't anywhere near the center of a city. It is the Milan Trade Fair, known as Fiera Milano, which was built on the site of an old gas refinery at the intersection of a couple of highways not far from the Milan airport. Conceived on a scale that makes the Javits Center look like a dinky cottage, the Fiera stretches for almost a mile, and its various sections provide nearly three and a half million square feet of exhibition space. When you first approach the Fiera, it looks like an endless modern factory, the epitome of every bad planning idea in the book. But, once you find your way in, you realize that the architect, Massimiliano Fuksas, has taken the blandness of convention centers as a challenge, a spur to create the kind of architectural flourish that dispels all thoughts of dull functionality.

The underlying scheme is brilliant in its simplicity. Dividing the exhibition space into eight halls, each as large as a medium-sized American convention center, Fuksas has placed them on either side of a central axis, an elevated street a mile long. This gives the site the kind of strongly defined core that most convention centers lack. To enliven the space, and to give it a human scale, Fuksas has designed the Fiera's centerpiece—a swirling glass canopy that is as arresting as anything built anywhere in the past five years.

This is a canopy that dances. Its undulating glass-and-steel swoops and swells as if it were not a solid mass but a billowing length of fabric. Supported on a nest of white steel columns, the structure forms a voluptuous counterpoint to the pristine boxes of the exhibition halls. Fuksas sculpts with glass as unself-consciously as a children's entertainer sculpts with balloons, and with the same sense of delight. The glass is set in a pattern of diamonds and triangles, which play off the rhythm of the curves. At a couple of points, Fuksas brings the glass down to the ground in a vortex construction that recalls a whirlpool; elsewhere he bends it skyward in a sudden surge of monumentality. From the top of the canopy it is possible to see the peaks of the Italian Alps to the west, and the resemblance between the two is unmistakable.



otograph by Harf Zimmerman.

The street beneath the canopy is punctuated by twenty cafés and restaurants, and by a series of freestanding structures containing meeting rooms and offices. Each of these building types is expressed by a particular architectural form: all the office buildings, for instance, are simple boxes of glass and steel, almost Miesian (although some of them are raised on very un-Miesian angled pillars, like crossed legs); all the meeting rooms are stainless-steel-clad pods, and they, too, sit atop columns. Such rational patterning insures that you never get that feeling, so typical of the convention-center experience, of being lost in a wilderness designed by Kafka. At ground level, there are reflecting pools and gardens, creating a constantly changing series of landscapes. The exhibition halls, of necessity unadorned inside, are clad in red-orange metal panels, which I take as Fuksas's acknowledgment that, since the halls are too big to disappear, you may as well have some fun with them. The orange façades also go some way toward lightening these leviathans, so that they don't overwhelm the rest of the place. As in a city, the public space connecting the buildings is more important than the buildings themselves.

Massimiliano Fuksas is based in Rome, and, like almost every other contemporary Italian architect not named Renzo Piano, he is all but unknown in the United States, despite having designed major projects in Europe for Ferrari, Armani, and the French government. "It was my idea to make it like a piazza for the suburbs—there are a hundred thousand people around it, and they have nothing," Fuksas told me recently, when I visited him in the Renaissance palazzo that houses his practice. By focussing his design around his invented street rather than around the exhibition space itself, Fuksas departed from the model that most architects have used in designing convention centers.

Almost every convention center has owed something to the Crystal Palace, the great exhibition hall outside London, completed in 1854, whose architect, Joseph Paxton, created an interior space more than eighteen hundred feet long, the biggest room anyone had ever built. Fuksas seems to have taken as his inspiration not the Crystal Palace but, rather, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, the glass-covered arcade of shops begun a few years later opposite Milan's cathedral. This is Milan's most important public space, and arguably the greatest covered street in the world. Keeping his exhibition spaces in the background, Fuksas has reserved the glitter for the connecting spaces between them.

The Fiera cannot replicate the serendipity that makes Italian cities so beloved, and which can be created only over centuries. But Fuksas doesn't pretend to. Convention-goers are expected to stay in Milan, and most of them travel to and from the city center via a new underground rail link. The Fiera is only a convention center—not one of those "edge city" nodes, like Tysons Corner outside Washington, or the Galleria section of Houston, which try to provide all the elements of a traditional city amid suburban sprawl and end up draining the metropolis to which they are attached. The Fiera has no shopping, no cineplexes, and, for now, no hotels—nothing to fulfill the current mantra of "mixed use" as the obligation of all large-scale urban-development projects. Like other recent large-scale projects in Europe, such as La Défense, outside Paris, and Canary Wharf, to the east of the City of London, it has been pushed to the outskirts in order to keep the historic core intact.

In some ways, the Fiera is an example of history repeating itself. The old Fiera di Milano, a few minutes from the historic center of the city, was erected in the nineteen-twenties. At that time, it was on the outskirts of Milan, but the city grew up around it. In recent years, the old Fiera had become a jumble of disconnected buildings in the middle of a fashionable residential neighborhood. It had neither the exhilarating disorder of a great agora nor the efficiency of a new convention center; it also had absolutely no room to expand. This site has now been sold to developers, who, predictably, have plans for large condominium towers to be built by superstar architects, including Zaha Hadid and Daniel Libeskind. But Milan will be lucky if this fashionable vertical architecture envisioned for its center manages to equal Fuksas's horizontal masterwork on the periphery. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

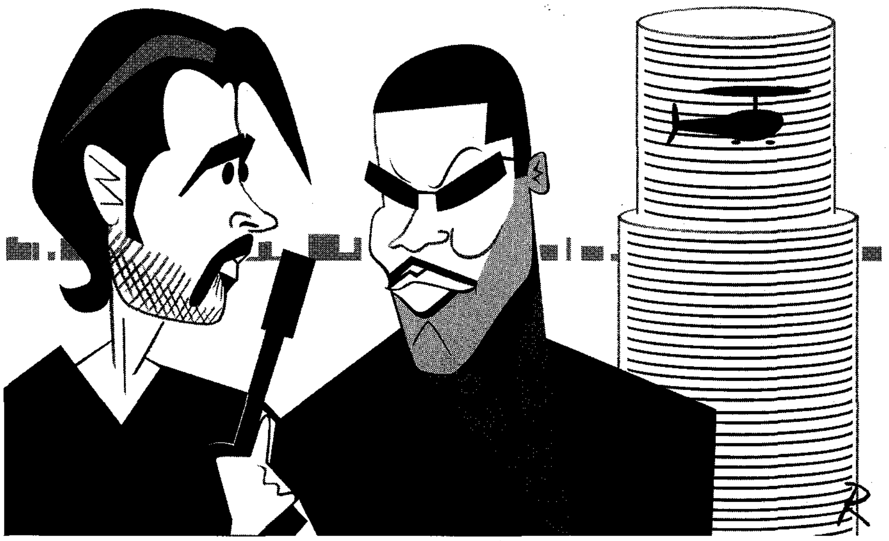
HOT AND BOTHERED

"Miami Vice" and "Little Miss Sunshine."

BY DAVID DENBY

With a flap of pink-flamingo wings, a whoosh of speedboats in the bay, and the rear-swinging amble of burnished girls in bikinis, the TV series "Miami Vice" launched itself week after week as a thoroughly sleazy delight. The show, which played on NBC from 1984 to 1989, was an enormous pop-culture event—the media poetry of the cocaine era. Raspy-voiced Don Johnson and Philip Michael Thomas, of the leopard eyes, were the stars—two cocky but not very talented male beauties who spoke in innuendos and dressed in pink T-shirts, Armani (white or gray), and sockless loafers. Anthony Yerkovich created the series, but Michael Mann, as executive producer, brooded over it like the Holy Ghost, bringing together and harmonizing the latest fashions in music, clothing, and design. Languorous and overripe, "Miami Vice" was the essence of commercial hip (if one can speak of such a thing); the best episodes were shot and cut like movies and glowed with neon and pastels and party lights in stucco mansions. The ostensible subject of the series was Miami-Dade County police work; the real subject was the varieties of pleasure under an endless American sun.

In the new movie based on the series, Michael Mann, the writer and director this time, hasn't hidden the sun, exactly, but the general tone of the material is darker, danker, dirtier, and much more violent. "Miami Vice" was fairly bloody for eighties TV, but here the blood hits the wall with a splat. This "Miami Vice" is a grim genre exercise—fascinating, certainly, and impressive at times, but only intermittently enjoyable. Colin Farrell is now Detective Sonny Crockett, and Jamie Foxx is Detective Ricardo Tubbs. These are serious fellows. Some of the time, they actually dress like cops, and they sternly refuse to engage in lounge-lizard repartee—they hardly engage at all. Foxx is fine, in a frowning, heavy-browed way, and he keeps staring at Farrell as if he wanted more out of him and were having trouble getting it. We share his frustration. Farrell is dour and anxious, and the mustache and stubble he wears is not only unflattering; it hides what we want to discover in his face. In this movie, as in the recent "Ask the Dust," Farrell's performance is vague and uncentered. The two partners are spiritually alone, which is a sombre but unnecessary lesson for us.



Colin Farrell and Jamie Foxx as the detectives Sonny Crockett and Ricardo Tubbs.

In general, it's a hard movie to read. The over-all shape of the story is clear enough, but the details, which might provide a satisfying sense of participation, are often elusive. Mann's material is an enlarged and much more complicated version of a plot familiar from the TV series: Crockett and Tubbs insinuate themselves into a drug-smuggling operation and try to smash it. Pretending to be heavy-wallet transporters, they travel to Haiti and Colombia, where they impress various subordinates with their bona fides as criminals. Then they meet the Colombian kingpin (Luis Tosar), a solemn gent with a Biblical beard, an expensive shirt, a magnificent house, and exquisitely phrased threats. We can relax and enjoy these early interviews, with their nasty jostling back and forth, because we know the boys will pass muster—if they didn't, there wouldn't be much of a movie. Once Crockett and Tubbs are in, "Miami Vice" devotes itself to betrayal, the constant of all drug-world pictures. Mann's narrative style in this movie is terse, abrupt, and fragmentary, his dialogue little more than advanced drug-dealer-and-cop jargon, verbal hardtack spat out of the corner of someone's mouth, some of it by Latino and Chinese actors with accents thick enough to make you long for the bad old days when Americans played most of the foreigners in Hollywood films and delivered their lines in accents that any Missourian could understand. "Miami Vice" risks, and often achieves, a kind of clenched impenetrability. The movie must have six variants of an ugly ruffian speaking into a cell phone words like these: "The deal is going down now. Fifty keys at three thousand each. Only the location is changed. The second barge on the Gowanus Canal. You have twelve seconds to get there." The picture turns dealing into a kind of expensive, high-speed scavenger hunt. Sometimes the geography is so confusing that we wonder how the film crew managed to show up at the right location.

At least "Miami Vice" isn't about a blandly handsome boob who flies through the air in red-and-blue tights. It's about guns and sex and fast boats, and, baffling as it is at times, it's still the kind of brutal fantasy that many of us relish a great deal more than yet another aerated digital

ROBERT RISKO

dream. We can enjoy the pretense that police work is like this—sleepless, incredibly dangerous, constantly vehicular, and unsullied by paperwork. The reason the infiltrating-the-crime-ring plot appears again and again is that our heroes, by posing as criminals, get to enjoy the freedom of criminals. Tubbs remains a cop, but Crockett dallies with the idea of joining the easy life for good. Girls, money, drugs, secrets—is he really going to give all that up and go back to a policeman's salary? The honesty of this kind of movie can be measured by how juicy its sense of licentious pleasure is. Despite its generally saturnine mood, this one passes the test. Crockett eyes the Chinese-Cuban mistress and business manager of the Colombian big guy—Isabella, played by the beautiful Gong Li. She stares back, they exchange a few words, and immediately take off for Cuba to drink and make out. This time, Mann doesn't do the long, sweeping takes that made the climax of his 1995 "Heat" so extraordinarily exciting, and he produces only a few of the glistening digital nightscapes that electrified the 2004 "Collateral." But, as the two lovers race across the Caribbean in a twin-engine Super Cat, the movie achieves a quality of screw-you willfulness, a sense of reckless freedom. That's the essence of crime, and, for us landlubbers, it makes up for a lot of narrative confusion and chewed-off gibberish that seems designed to shut us out.

"Little Miss Sunshine," an independently made comedy (i.e., a comedy without Owen Wilson, Ben Stiller, Jim Carrey, or even Vince Vaughn), is about a winner-take-all society—America—that is driving its citizens crazy. Its hero and victim, Richard Hoover (Greg Kinnear), is a motivational speaker who has invented a nine-step program for success. Richard himself hasn't notched many victories on the barrel of his ego: at a lecture, he has more steps than listeners. But he keeps his chin up, puts his best foot forward, and, in general, does whatever is required of an American male in the age of George W. Bush to mess things up. Richard is the uncertain head of a hard-pressed family that lives, uncomfortably, in an Albuquerque house with a lot of cheap wood panelling but not much space. His seven-year-old daughter, Olive (Abigail Breslin), is dying to win the Little Miss Sunshine contest. His wife's brother, Frank (Steve Carell), whom the family has taken in, is the No. 1 Proust scholar in the country but has made a fool of himself over a male graduate student who has leaped into the bed of the No. 2 Proust scholar. Richard's fifteen-year-old stepson, Dwayne (Paul Dano), fantasizes that he is a Nietzschean *Übermensch*. Disdaining his family, he has withdrawn into silence; he's setting himself up to be a perfect fall guy in the winning-is-everything philosophy. I offer this list of colorful characters because I want to make clear how thoroughly the writer, Michael Arndt, and the husband-and-wife directing team of Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris have risked calamity. Isn't this setup a prescription for family-comedy whimsy and mush? Aren't there too many oddballs in the group? Fortunately, a couple of realists live in the house, too: Richard's coarsely honest dad (Alan Arkin), who wants to snort white powder and look at porn magazines a few more times before he dies, and Richard's overworked wife, Sheryl (Toni Collette), who tries to hold things together and put food, or at least a bucket of chicken, on the table.

All six of them pile into an old VW bus with a worn-out clutch to take Olive to her contest, in California. As you may have guessed, they have nutty adventures on the road. But Arndt, it turns out, has a good ear for the irritations and the repetitions of family hell, and the dialogue is just candid enough to keep us off balance. This is an ensemble picture, but the directors provide a variety of intimate moments among the actors, many of them casually moving. It's pleasing to see the old tiger Alan Arkin roar again, and the sullen-mouthed Toni Collette comes off, as she did in "The Sixth Sense," as the put-upon saint of daily life. The VW bus, with a lot of pushing, gets into gear, and so does the movie. When the Hoovers arrive at the contest, the family is appalled by the spangled seven-year-olds showing themselves off. Should they withdraw from the contest? Louse it up? What's the point, after all, of turning everything into a competition? Winning, we're meant to think, is not so important, but a comedy that expects its audience to understand references to Proust and Nietzsche probably can't be accused of advocating mediocrity. In terms that Richard Hoover might understand, "Little Miss Sunshine," a slight but charming movie, is a modest winner. ♦

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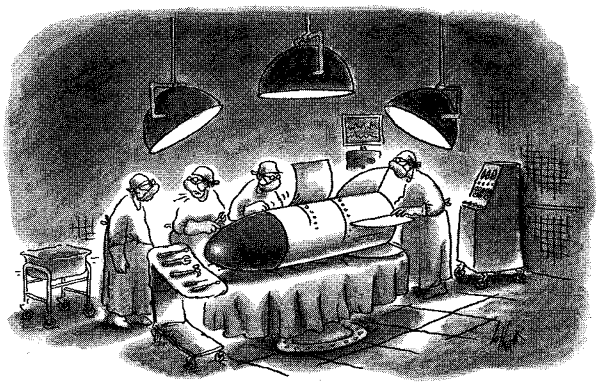
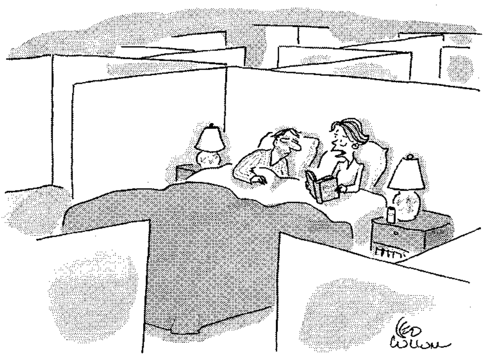
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Mick Stevens, must be received by Sunday, July 30th. Finalists in the July 10th & 17th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 21st issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Damn it, I'm a brain surgeon, not a rocket scientist!"
Richard Haspel, Brookline, Mass.



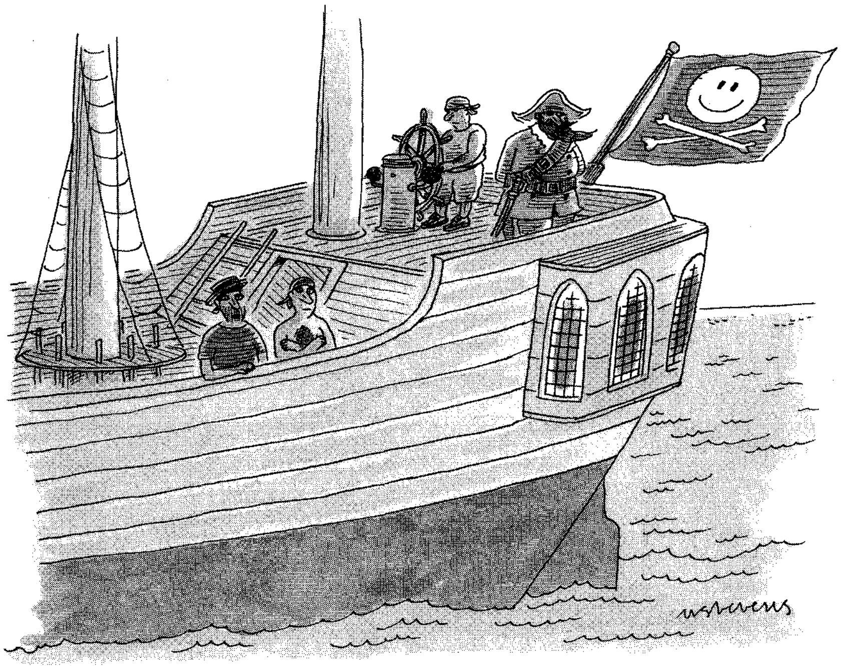
THE FINALISTS

"Try counting rats."
Laura Doty, Santa Rosa, Calif.

"Sooner or later, you're going to have to learn your way to the bathroom yourself."
Noel Armstrong, Maple Shade, N.J.

"We never get out anymore."
Lizzy Cross, New York City

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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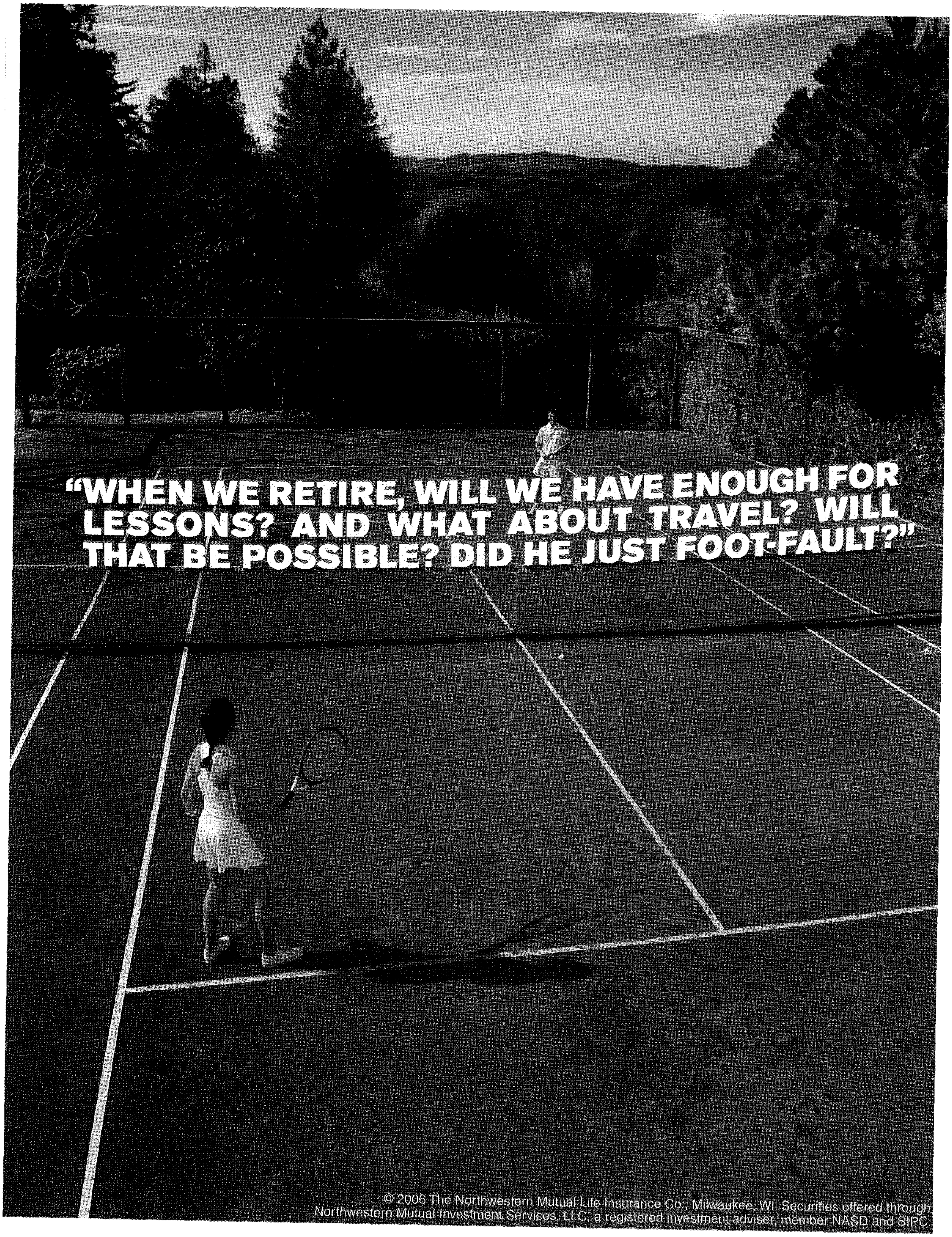
"WHEN WE RETIRE, WILL WE HAVE ENOUGH FOR LESSONS? AND WHAT ABOUT TRAVEL? WILL THAT BE POSSIBLE? DID HE JUST FOOT-FAULT?"

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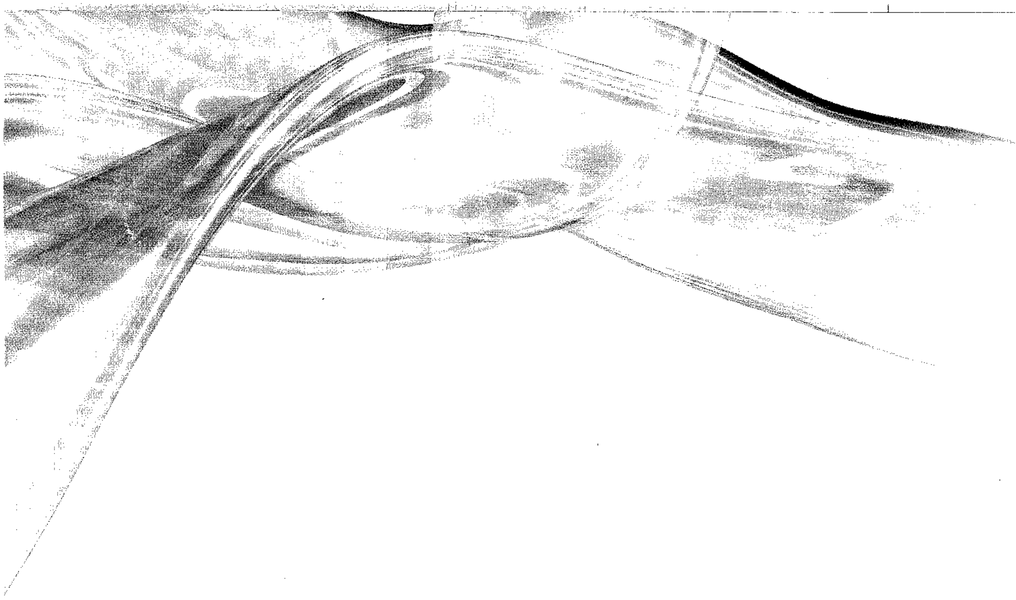

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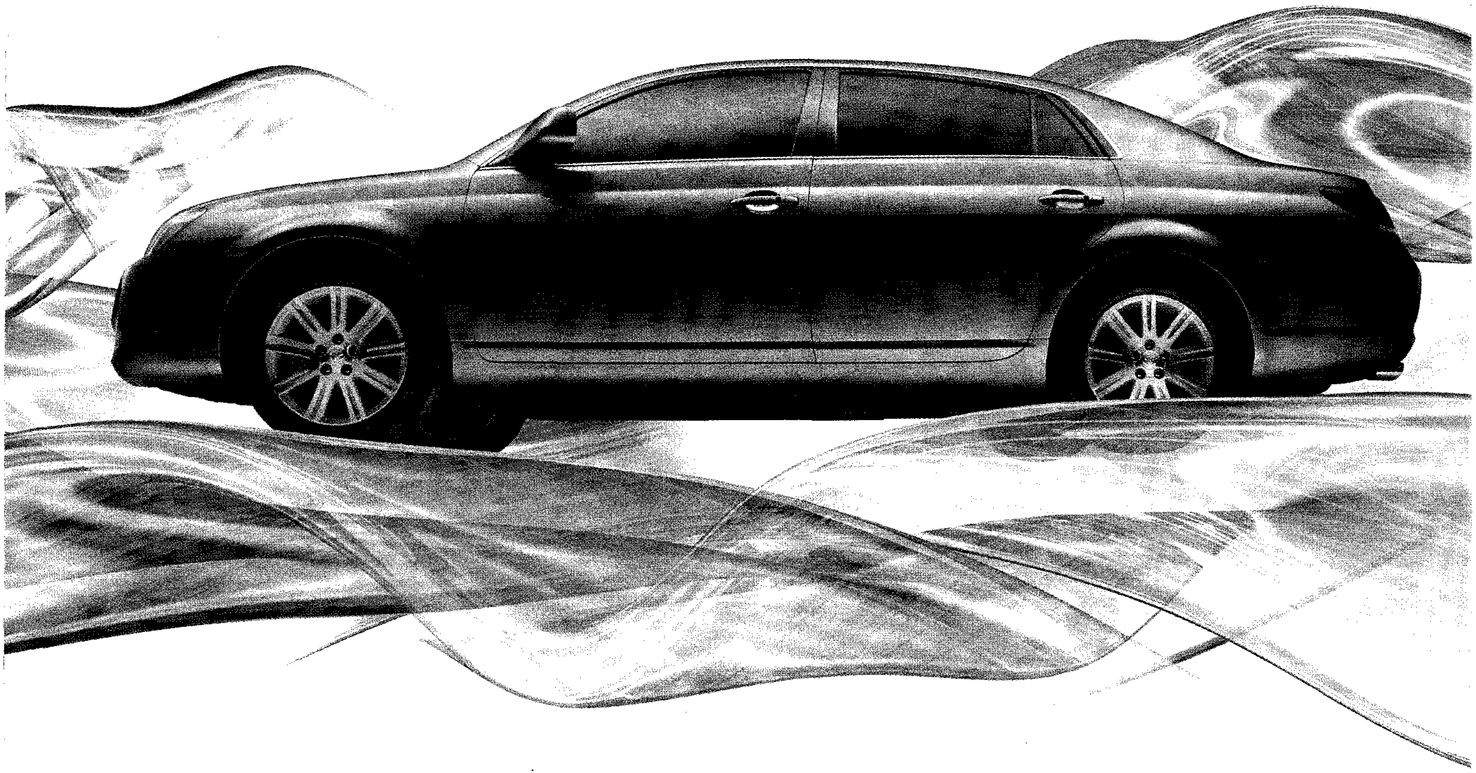

Avalon Limited shown with available equipment. [1]Dynamic Laser Cruise Control was designed to assist the driver and is not a substitute for safe and attentive driving practices. Please see your *Owner's Manual* for important cautions and instructions. Requires Vehicle Stability Control (VSC). [2]Available on Limited only.
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